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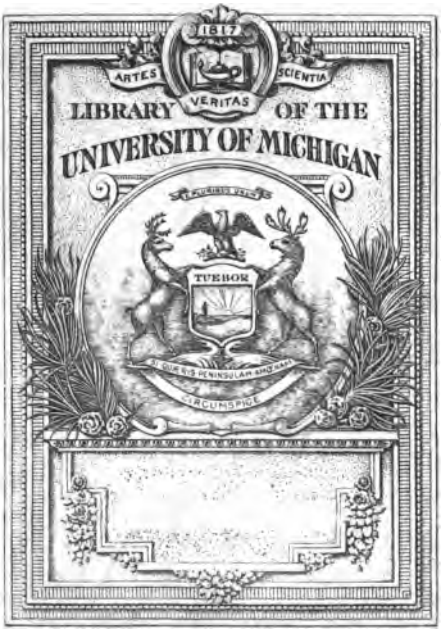

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LABOR

A novel

BY

EMILE ZOLA

Harper & Bros.,
New York and Londo
1901

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LABOR

I

STROLLING without any definite object, Luc
ment, when he left Beauclair, had taken the
to Brias, which follows the glen, down which runs
little torrent called La Mionne. Its course runs betw
two promontories formed by the Monts Bleuses.
when he reached the Pit—the name given in that ne
borhood to the steel and iron works of Qurignon—he
ticed at one angle of the wooden bridge, crouching tim
against the parapet, two dark, miserable forms. At
his heart felt pity for them. One was a woman who s
ed very young. She was very poorly clad, with her
half hidden in a small, ragged, woollen shawl; the o
was a boy of about six, with hardly clothes to cover
His face was pale, and he clung to the woman's sk
The eyes of both were fixed on the door of the wo
They were waiting there, motionless, with the hop
patience of despair.

Luc stopped to see what they were gazing at. It
almost six o'clock; daylight was nearly over—the
of a damp, miserable day in the middle of Septem
It was Saturday, and since Thursday the rain had n
ceased. It was not raining now, but a sharp wind
driving before it streams of soot, and some ragged clo
through which flickered dim rays of melancholy ye
light. The road, furrowed by rails, with its big
ing-stones disjointed by the continual passing of

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ed carts, was now a river of black mud; all the black coal-dust scattered from the coal-pits near Brias, where tumbrels were passing incessantly, had blackened the entire glen; coal-dust came down in black streaks on the leprous mass of buildings that formed the works; it seemed to blacken the very clouds of steam and to make them look like coal-smoke. There was a feeling in the very air as if some misfortune were impending over the place, as if the sooty twilight boded some disaster; some persons might have thought it announced the end of the world.

As Luc passed within a few yards of the young woman and the child, he heard the boy say, with the precocious air of a little man:

"Listen, big sister; don't you think I had better speak to him first? That might make him less angry."

But the woman answered:

"No, no, little brother; it is not anything for children to interfere with."

And then they continued to wait, silently, with a look of restless resignation.

Luc looked at the Pit. He had been there as a matter of curiosity, and as a man who knew the business, the first time he had been in Beauclair, which had been the previous spring. And during the few hours he had now been in Beauclair, summoned by his friend Jordan, he had heard something of the frightful state of affairs in that part of the country: A terrible strike had lasted for two months, which had brought ruin on both parties, the works having suffered greatly from the stoppage of their machinery, while the workmen were nearly dead with hunger and with fury at finding themselves unable to coerce their employers. Only the Thursday before had work been resumed, after concessions made on both sides, the terms having been debated with great heat, and concessions from either party extorted with much difficulty. The work-people had gone back to work sullen and dissatisfied, like men who having been conquered, are indignant at their defeat, and cherish in their hearts a vivid

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remembrance of their sufferings and a bitter desire to avenge them.

Beneath clouds of blackness lay a dark mass of buildings and sheds around the Pit. The Pit was like a monster who, having taken up his abode in that place, had by degrees increased and multiplied habitations round him so as to form a little town. By the color of those buildings it was easy to trace the date of their erection. They were scattered over several acres. The works employed a thousand men. The blue slate roofs of the larger buildings and their many windows looked down on the far more humble buildings of an earlier date. Higher still might be seen from the road the giant domes of the cementation kilns, as well as the tempering-tower, about eighty feet in height, where great guns were suddenly plunged into a bath of petroleum. Taller still, there rose smoking chimneys, chimneys of all heights and sizes—a forest of chimneys—which mingled their own soot with that of the sooty clouds, while little exhaust-pipes shot out from time to time white plumes of steam—the breath of their nostrils. Steam seemed, indeed, to be the monster's respiration. The dust and steam continually exhaling from him as he worked seemed as if he were sibilating with his labor. Then there was the pulsation that took place in his interior, shocks and groans occasioned by his efforts, the vibration of his machinery, the distinct cadence of the shingling-hammers, the heavy, rhythmic blows of the great steam-hammer, that resounded like bells and made the very earth tremble. And nearer, close to the road, inside a little building where the first Qurignon had had his forge, could be heard the wild throbbing of two steam-hammers, beating like the pulse of the Colossus, whose furnaces again and again sent forth the flames that consumed the lives of men and women.

In the reddened mist of the closing day which hung over the Pit, not a single electric lamp had as yet been lighted in the yards. No light shone through the dusty window-panes. Only, out of one of the great workshops, a vivid jet of flame pierced through the darkness,

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proceeding from metal in a state of fusion. A master-puddler must have opened the door of his furnace. And nothing else, not so much as a spark, revealed the reign of fire in this place—fire which was all in all in this sad town darkened by men's weary toil; fire which glowed everywhere within the place; fire subjugated, made useful and obedient, moulding iron as if it were soft wax, giving to man dominion over the earth as it has done since the days of the first Vulcans who mastered it.

But the clock in the little belfry, a wooden structure surmounting the building in which the manager and clerks conducted the business of the works, struck six. And again Luc heard the poor boy saying:

"Listen, big sister; now they will be coming."

"Yes, yes, I know," replied the young woman, "only keep quiet."

The little movement that she made to detain him caused the ragged woollen shawl round her head to be drawn a little from her face, and Luc was surprised to see the delicacy of her features. She could not have been more than twenty; her light hair was in disorder; she had a little, thin face, which he then thought almost ugly; her blue eyes were dimmed with weeping, and her mouth was colorless, with an expression of suffering. But what a beautiful, girlish form she had, under her old worn gown! and with what weak and trembling arms she pressed to her side the boy who was clinging to her skirts—no doubt her little brother; he was as fair as she was, with his hair ruffled like hers, but with a look that seemed stronger and more resolute. Luc felt his pity for them increase, while they, on their part, sad and distrustful, had been growing uneasy at the observation of the gentleman standing there and looking at them so persistently. The woman especially seemed embarrassed by his gaze. He was a young man of twenty-five, tall and handsome, with square shoulders and powerful hands; his face was full of health and happiness, and above its firm features was a brow straight but prominent, the forehead that belonged to the family of Froment. The girl had several times lowered

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her blue eyes under the glance of his brown ones, that looked her full in the face. But at last she, in her turn, ventured to steal a glance at him, and then, perceiving that he smiled kindly, she drew back and was again absorbed in her own unhappiness.

There was a ringing of bells, a stir in the Pit, and the day gang began to come out, to be replaced by that of night, for the devouring activity of the monster was never to be suspended; it flamed and forged night and day. The workmen, however, did not come out rapidly. The greater part of them had asked for an advance upon their wages, although work had only recommenced on Thursday; but great was the destitution of their families after two months of the terrible strike. They came out at last in little groups, or one by one, with downcast looks, sadly and hurriedly, with their hands in their pockets, fingering the few five-franc pieces, so hardly earned, which were to give bread to their wives and little ones. Then they disappeared along the dark road.

"Here he comes, sister," whispered the child. "You can see him now. He is with Bourron."

"Yes, yes, but hold your tongue."

Two workmen had just come out—two puddlers. And the first one, walking with Bourron, and with his cloth jacket flung over his shoulder, was a fellow about twenty-six years of age, with red hair and a red beard, rather short, but very muscular, with a snub nose, a prominent forehead, stern jaws, and high cheek-bones; but he had a pleasant laugh, which made him a fellow who makes conquests among women. While Bourron, five years older, buttoned up in his old jacket of green cotton velvet, was a thin, dried-up fellow, whose face was like that of a horse, with long cheeks, short chin, and squinting eyes; evidently he was a man of quiet temper, easy to live with, and always under the influence of some comrade.

At the first glance, when he saw the sad forms of the woman and child on the other side of the road in an angle of the bridge, he gave a shove with his elbow to his companion.

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"See, Ragu. There's Josine and Nanet. Look out, if you don't wish they should bother you."

Ragu, in a rage, clinched his fists.

"Devil take the girl! I've had enough of her. I've turned her out-of-doors. Now if she tries to get hold of me again, you'll see what I'll do to her."

He seemed to be rather drunk, as he usually was at any time when he exceeded his three quarts of wine a day, which he said were absolutely essential to prevent the heat of the furnace from drying up his skin. And in this half-tipsy condition he was quite disposed to boast to a comrade with what cruelty he could treat a girl whom he no longer loved.

"You'll see. I'll drive her to the wall. I'm done with her!"

Josine, with Nanet clinging to her skirts, had timidly made a few steps towards him. But she stopped when she saw two other workmen come up to Ragu and Bourron. These men belonged to the night shift, and were coming from Beauclair. The elder, Fauchard, a fellow about thirty, though he looked forty, was a man who removed the crucibles from the furnaces. He was a wreck already by reason of this work; his face looked as if it had been boiled, his eyes seemed to have been burned out of his head, his body was cooked and knotted up by the heat of the crucible-furnaces from which he extracted the melted metal. The other one, Fortuné, his brother-in-law, was a boy of sixteen, though he looked barely twelve; his body was lean, his face thin, his hair discolored; it seemed as if he had never grown since he had taken to work, and as if he were nothing now but a mere human machine, sitting all day by a lever which set a shingling-hammer in operation, in the midst of the smoke which blinded and the noise which deafened him.

Fauchard had an old black wicker basket on his arm, and he stopped to ask the two others in his hoarse voice:

"Did you get through?"

He meant, had they been to the desk to get their pay, and if they had got an advance? And when Ragu, by

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way of answer, clapped his hand upon his pocket, where some five-franc pieces clinked together, he gave a gesture of despair.

"Good Heaven! thunder and lightning! now I shall have an empty stomach till to-morrow morning, and to-night I shall perish with thirst unless my wife before long performs the miracle of bringing me my ration."

His ration meant four quarts of wine a working-day, or night, and he said that that was but just enough to limber up his body, so completely did the furnace dry up all the blood and water that was in him. He gave a mournful glance at his basket, in which was rolling about only one bit of bread. When he could not get his four quarts a day it was to him the end of everything—the long, black hours of suffering in the stifling labors of the furnace became intolerable.

"Bah!" said Bourron, reassuringly, "your wife will not fail you. There is not her equal for contriving to get credit in Beauclair."

Then all the four, stopping short in the thick mud of the road, became suddenly silent, and all bowed to some one as he drew near them. Luc saw coming along the road, seated in a little wheeled chair, which a servant was pushing, an old gentleman with a broad face, large, regular features, and long, white hair. He recognized Jérôme Qurignon—Monsieur Jérôme, as everybody in that part of the country called him—the son of Blaise Qurignon, once a laborer in the steel-works, the man who had founded the Pit. Very old now, and partly paralyzed, he had himself wheeled about thus in all kinds of weather, never speaking a word. This evening, as he was passing by the works on his way to Guerdache, a country-place in the neighborhood where his daughter lived, he made a sign to his servant to go slowly, and with his eyes, still sharp and observant, he gazed for some time at his monster at work, at the day shift coming out, at the night shift going in, under the heavy mist that was making the sky livid, darkened as it was already by passing clouds. Then he looked at the manager's house, a square building stand-

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ing in a garden, which he himself had had put up forty years before, when he had reigned there as a king and as a conqueror, and had amassed millions.

"Monsieur Jérôme is not disquieting himself as to how *he* shall get his wine to-night," said Bourron, with a low laugh, lowering his voice at the same time.

Ragu shrugged his shoulders.

"You know," he said, "that my great-grandfather was the fellow-workman of Monsieur Jérôme's father. They were just two workmen who together tended the fires in this place, and luck might just as well have come to Ragu as to Qurignon. It's all luck—when it's not dishonesty."

"Hush!" whispered Bourron again. "You'll get yourself into trouble."

The self-importance of Ragu subsided suddenly, and as Monsieur Jérôme, passing the group, looked full at the four men with his clear blue eyes, Ragu bowed again, with the timid respect of a workman who may, indeed, speak disrespectfully of his employer, but who has the results of a long slavery in his blood, and trembles before his sovereign, who can give him or withhold from him everything he most desires. The servant slowly pushed the little carriage past the group, and Monsieur Jérôme disappeared along the black road leading into Beauclair.

"Bah!" said Fauchard, philosophically. "He isn't so happy, after all, in his wheeled chair; and, besides, if one comes to think of it, he can't have had much fun lately the way things have been going. Every man has his own troubles. . . . Ah! thunder and lightning! if Natalie would only bring me my wine!"

And he went into the factory, taking along with him little Fortuné, who had looked stupid and had said nothing. Their shoulders, which already had an air of weariness, were lost to view in the increasing darkness which overspread the buildings, while Ragu and Bourron walked on, and, each stimulating the other to a debauch, they went towards a *cabaret* in the town. It was all right, they thought, to drink and laugh a little after the privation they had been going through.

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Then Luc, who had remained leaning against the parapet of the bridge, moved by pity and curiosity, saw Josine come forward with trembling steps to bar the road that Ragu was taking. For one moment she had hoped that he would cross the bridge and take the way to his own home, for that was the direct road to old Beauclair, a wretched group of sordid houses where most of the workmen in the Pit lived. But when she perceived that he was making for the better part of the town, she knew too well what was going to happen. She saw him in the *cabaret,* the money in his pocket spent for drink, she foresaw the long evening she must pass in waiting for him, she and her little brother, faint for want of food, shelterless in the street in the sharp wind. And suffering, as well as sudden anger, gave her such courage that she planted herself before him—she, so frail and pitiful, confronted the rough man.

"Auguste," she said, "just think—you cannot leave me out-doors!"

He made no answer, and tried to pass on.

"If you are not coming back soon, at least give me the key. We have been all day in the streets. We have not eaten one mouthful."

He burst out with a laugh.

"Leave me alone! Ha! have you done stopping me?"

"Why did you carry off the key this morning? All I ask is that you should give me the key. You can come back when you like. . . . But it is dark night now. You can't wish we should pass it in the streets."

"The key!—the key! I have not got the key; and if I had I would not give it you. . . . Just please to understand that I have had enough of you. I won't have anything more to do with you. It is too much to have starved together for two months, and you may go and look for me somewhere else."

He yelled this in her face, furiously, savagely, and the poor soul trembled at his violence and at his savage words. Yet she persisted, with the gentle, resigned insistence of those who feel the earth opening beneath their feet:

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"Oh! you are cruel—cruel! To-night, when you come home, we shall talk it over. I will go away to-morrow, if I must. But to-night—to-night—you must give me the key."

With that the man fell into a fury. He pushed her, he flung her on one side with a brutal gesture.

"Damn you! Can't a man have a free path along the road? Be off with you! Go wherever you choose! I tell you I have done with you!"

And then, as little Nanet, when his big sister burst into tears, came forward with his air of decision, his pink cheeks and his beruffled hair, Ragu continued:

"Ah! there's that brat, now—the whole family for me to look after! Just stop, you rascal, till I give you a good kick!"

Josine had quickly drawn Nanet back to her side. And both stood silent in the black mud, shivering at their forlorn situation, while the two men walked on and disappeared in the gathering darkness, going in the direction of Beauclair, where lamps began to be lighted one by one. Bourron, not a bad man, had had an impulse at first to interfere, but being from cowardice under the influence of his jolly, handsome comrade, he let things alone. And Josine, after a moment's hesitation, asked herself if there could be any use in following them, and decided, when they disappeared, to give up in despair. Slowly she walked after them, holding her little brother by the hand. They kept close to the walls, taking all kinds of precautions, as if they feared they might be seen and beaten, in order to keep them from hanging onto their tyrant's steps.

Luc, in his indignation, came very near flinging himself on Ragu, and pommelling him soundly. Ah! what misery may be produced by labor, men changed into wolves by overwork, by injustice, by bread so hard to earn, and that must be shared by other starving creatures! During the two months' strike men had snatched crusts from each other in hungry exasperation; daily quarrels had taken place, and now, on the first pay-day, they rush-

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ed to alcohol, their recovered consolation, leaving uncared for the women who had been their companions in their days of suffering—the lawful wife or the girl they had seduced. And Luc thought over the four years he had just passed in a Paris faubourg, in one of those great, pestiferous tenement buildings where the poverty of the working-man may be encountered on every story. What tragedies he had seen there, what sorrows had he not vainly tried to alleviate! The frightful problem of the sufferings and degradation of wage-earners had often come before him, he had sounded to its depths atrocious wickedness, he had watched the frightful ulcer which eats into society at the present day, he had passed hours of generous anxiety trying to find out a remedy, but had always knocked his head against a wall of brass—the barrier of existing realities. And now, the very first evening that he came to Beauclair, induced to return to it by something that had happened unexpectedly, he was the spectator of this savage scene, he had beheld this sad, pale creature flung into the street, to die of hunger, and it was the fault of that all-devouring monster whose intestinal fires he heard roaring in the Pit and escaping in black smoke under a gloomy sky.

A sharp wind blew past him; drops of rain began to fall, and the wind howled. Luc still stood on the bridge, his face turned towards Beauclair, trying to recognize the country by the faint light that came from the smoke-laden clouds. On his right was the Pit, whose buildings bordered the road to Brias, beneath him rolled the Mionne, while higher up on an embankment to his left ran the railroad from Brias to Magnolles. The whole bottom of the glen was occupied by the works, from the cliffs of the Monts Bleuses to the place where the gorge grew wide and opened out on the immense plain of Roumagne. It was in a sort of estuary, at the spot where the ravine debouched upon the plain, that Beauclair had erected its houses, at first a miserable collection of dwellings for working-men, then, stretching out as the ground became flat, it became a little second-class town, which had its Prefecture, its

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Mairie, its court-house, and its prison, while the old church, whose ancient walls were beginning to decay, was placed right across the road between the old and the new town. The place was the chief city of the district, but it had a population of barely six thousand souls, five thousand of whom were poor, dark souls, confined in suffering bodies, deformed and degraded by the cruel labor of the Pit. Luc managed, however, to recognize, as soon as he caught sight of it beyond the Pit, the blast-furnace of La Crêcherie standing on the edge of a promontory of the Monts Bleuses. He could make out its dark outline. Labor! labor!—who was to elevate it? who would regenerate labor?—who would reorganize it according to the natural laws of truth and justice? who would give it its all-powerful, noble place, that it might control the world? who would cause the riches of the earth to be justly distributed, and thus realize among men the happiness that is due to all of them?

When the rain once more ceased, Luc began to descend the hill towards Beauclair. Workmen were still coming away from the Pit; he walked among them. All of them felt a raging desire to resume work after the misfortunes and miseries caused by the strike. Such sadness, such a sense of revolt and of powerlessness to mend anything took possession of him, that he would have quitted Beauclair that very evening but that he feared to vex Jordan. Jordan was the owner of La Crêcherie; he was in great distress because of the sudden death of the old engineer who had superintended his chief furnace. He had written to Luc, begging him to come at once and look into things for him, saying he would give him good advice if he would come. And then, when the young man, from affection for the old one, hastened to obey the summons, he found on his arrival another letter in which Jordan informed him of another catastrophe, the tragic death of a cousin at Cannes, which obliged him to go there immediately. He would be away, he said, for three days; he begged Luc to wait for him till Monday evening, and to take up his quarters in a small house in his garden,

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where he might live as if at home. Luc, therefore, had two days more to wait in that little town, with nothing to do. He had gone out that evening to look about him; he had told the servant who had been charged to wait on him that he would not be back to dinner, meaning to dine in some *cabaret,* for he was always passionately desirous of observing the manners of the people. He liked to see things for himself, to comprehend, and to receive instruction.

New reflections came over him as through frightful wind and rain he walked along in the black mud, in company with heavy-footed workmen, all silent and self-absorbed. He felt ashamed, at length, of his sentimental weakness. Why should he want to get out of this place when here he might find the problem, sharp and bitter, a desire for whose solution seemed to haunt him? He ought not to decline the combat; he would amass facts; perhaps he might here, at last, discover the right way, which thus far he had been looking for in darkness and confusion.

Son of Pierre and Marie Froment, he had, like his three brothers, Matthieu, Marc, and Jean, learned a trade—a handicraft—in addition to his especial studies as an engineer. He could dress stones, he could act as an architect, he could build houses, and, loving any work in his own line, he had taken pleasure in Parisian shipyards. He knew nothing of the sorrows of the laborers; he dreamed only of fraternally aiding to secure the future triumph of labor. But what was he to do? Where should he make a beginning? How bring about the uncertain solution of the labor problem that he had at heart? Taller and stronger than his brother Matthieu, with an open countenance like a man of action, with his high forehead, and his quick brain always at work, he had thus far in his life clasped only emptiness in his two strong arms, while he had felt so impatient to reform, to reconstruct the world. A sudden blast of wind staggered him, a sort of hurricane which made him shiver. Could he have been sent to this place as a sort of Messiah, led by circumstances over

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which he had no control into this unhappy corner of the earth, with a mission to bring it happiness and deliverance?

When, raising his head, Luc shook off these vague reflections, he found himself in the town of Beauclair. Four wide streets came out on an open space, the centre of the town, where was the Mairie, and these streets cut the town into four almost equal parts. Each bore the name of some neighboring city, towards which it was the direct way; on the north, the street of Brias; west, that of Saint Grou; east, that of Magnolles; and south, that of Formerie. The most populous of these streets, and that in which at the present moment there was a great assemblage of people, with many open shops, was the Rue de Brias, and in this he found himself. All the shops were in this street, close to each other, and they were disgorging that evening a dark stream of working-people. Just as he reached the great door of the shoemaking establishment of Gourier, the mayor of the town, it was thrown open, letting out a crowd of five hundred workpeople, among whom were two hundred women and children. Besides this establishment there were in the side-streets the Chodorge factory, where they made nothing but nails; the Hausser factory, which turned out every year more than a hundred thousand scythes and sickles; and the Miranda factory, a place which was exclusively for agricultural implements and machines. All these manufactories had suffered from the strike in the Pit, whence they supplied themselves, at wholesale prices, with steel and iron. Hunger and distress had fallen upon them, and the lean, haggard population streaming out upon the muddy pavement looked at the men from the steel and iron works with angry eyes; they said nothing; they walked on with apparent resignation, quietly and in close order. The street was black with them, for there were only a few gas-lamps in the street, whose yellow flames flickered in the wind. And what made it more difficult to circulate was that mothers of families, having at last obtained a few sous, were hastening to the shops where provisions were

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sold, that they might give themselves the luxury of a big loaf and, possibly, a little piece of meat besides.

Luc had the sensation of being in a besieged city on the evening when the siege was raised. Gendarmes were going and coming among the crowd, quite a number of armed men were in the streets, watching the inhabitants, as if they were afraid that some one might recommence hostilities; that some sudden fury, roused by the remembrance of past suffering, might lead to pillage, and complete the town's destruction. The authorities and the tradespeople had triumphed, they had got the better of the wage-earners, but the slaves they had put down maintained so menacing a passive silence that bitterness seemed to poison the very air; the blasts of wind roared of terror and of vengeance, and possibly even a frightful massacre might occur. An indistinct hum came from the passing crowd, crushed indeed and powerless, and the glint of a weapon, the stripes upon a uniform here and there among the groups, told of the unavowed fears of the employers, who sat, lazily, satisfied with their victory, behind the thick curtains of their houses. The black crowd of workmen, who had suffered hunger, continued to flow on, crowding each other, silent and with bowed heads.

As Luc continued his stroll and joined company with some of these groups, he stopped, listened, and endeavored to understand. At last he halted before a great butcher-shop, thrown open to the street, its gas-jets flaming among the ruddy viands. Dacheux, the master-butcher, a big, apoplectic-looking man, was standing in the doorway watching his goods, very eager to serve servants who came from respectable houses, very suspicious when some poor woman came in. He had just been watching from his door a tall, thin, fair-haired woman, who looked very poor, very pale, and very sad. She must have been rosy in her youth, but she had lost her freshness; she held a handsome boy of from four to six years of age with one hand, while on the other arm she carried a heavy basket, out of which stuck the necks of four quart wine-bottles. The butcher recognized her as Fauchard's wife. He had got tired of

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refusing her continual requests for credit on small purchases, and, when he saw she was going to enter his shop, he stood in her way at the door.

"What are you wanting here now?"

"Monsieur Dacheux," faltered Natalie, "if you would be so good— You know that my husband has gone back to the works; to-morrow he will have some money. So Monsieur Caffiaux has been so kind as to let me have these four quarts of wine, and if you would be so very good, Monsieur Dacheux, as to let me have on credit a little bit of meat—only a little bit—"

The butcher grew angry; he stormed at her, and the blood mounted to his face.

"Have I not already told you, no? Your strike has very nearly ruined me. How can you suppose I shall take part in helping you who made it? There are always enough idle workpeople who injure honest folks' business. Those who don't work enough to buy meat, don't deserve to eat any."

He was thinking of politics. He took part with the rich, with the strong. He overawed his neighbors; he was ignorant and sanguinary, and that word "meat" had, when he uttered it, considerable importance, it became aristocratic. It was holy meat to him, a luxury only to be eaten by the better classes—when it ought to have been for all.

"You have owed me four francs ever since last summer," he went on. "I have to pay what I owe—and I do."

Natalie fidgeted, persisted, and implored him in pitiful, low tones. But something happened which completed her discomfiture. Madame Dacheux, a little, ugly, dark, insignificant woman, who, nevertheless, it was said, succeeded in being notoriously unfaithful to her husband, had come forward with her little daughter Julienne, a child four years of age, healthy, fat, and fair, and always merry. When the two children saw each other, Louis Fauchard began to laugh, notwithstanding his poverty, while the opulent Julienne, much amused, and doubtless

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having no precocious conception of soci
up to him and took him by the hand, er himself. That's
moment he felt as if he had found a pl akes pains to make
comed her with the frank joyousness o people who want to
"Damn that girl!" cried Dacheux
seeing this. "She is forever runnin rsène and Olympe,
. . . Go and sit down there, right aw f the shop for them;
Then he turned his wrath against h complaisantly at the
back at once to her desk, where she read and merry face
money, telling her that she would c
after her cash-box, so that she mig ariste," said handsome
had been two days before, and he r son and brought him
self to the people in the shop co
he had not ceased to fume about ng a cake to Arsène, she
"This was how it happened
poor-looking woman got in, and my darling; you should
of the cash-box while Madame
the flies. . . . The thief could who had felt shy at first,
money in her hand. And, I hose dear little children—
She is in prison. . . . It is fr this world? If they were
body will rob and pillage us, as men do, to devour each
restore order." y, saying he hoped, all the
And his suspicious eyes w r later. Madame Mitaine,
make sure that the hand of n ood looking after them as
woman out of employment, h d drove down the Rue de
stand, as they might have fil that Luc observed Madame
round pot that stands on th le boy, go up to the baker's
changer. ords that he could not hear;
Luc saw Fauchard's wife ore credit, for suddenly Ma-
butcher might call up a g e that meant "yes," went
stood motionless with her litt her a large loaf of bread,
street, among the crowd gathe off in haste, pressed close to
adorned with mirrors and a
opposite the butcher-shop, an full of suspicion, had been
partly open, gave those who l opposite, and he cried out:
and of great golden loaves. do like that! There have
lost in contemplation, gazing a en at Caffiaux's. They are
Luc, forgetting them, was grow
passing inside the bakery. e, who had gone back to

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refusing her contin topped before the door; out of it got a
chases, and, when he ttle boy of eight and a little girl two
he stood in her way t the counter stood the baker's wife,

"What are you wi Mitaine, a stout blonde, who, at thirty-

"Monsieur Dache erb woman; all the men in the coun-
be so good— You k n in love with her, but she had
to the works; to-mor r fidelity to her husband, a spare,
Monsieur Caffiaux has , very seldom to be seen, for he
four quarts of wine, at his kneading-trough or attend-
Monsieur Dacheux, a r her on a bench sat her son, Eva-
bit of meat—only a litt n years old, fat and fair, like his

The butcher grew an look in his face and with tender
blood mounted to his fac

"Have I not already nt! And how are you? And
very nearly ruined me. H d Olympe, too? One has no
part in helping you who ll."
enough idle workpeople wh little over thirty, had a broad,
Those who don't work eno hurry to answer, but at length
to eat any."

He was thinking of pol is good; we are all right at
rich, with the strong. He c nd that is sick. I cannot send
ignorant and sanguinary, mised you, Madame Mitaine.
when he uttered it, consid g. And as I was coming to
aristocratic. It was holy m h the cart, I thought I had
be eaten by the better classes
for all.

"You have owed me fou troubles, of land which would
mer," he went on. "I hav cultivated it, and which did
do." s seed and fertilizers. The

Natalie fidgeted, persisted pathetically nodded her head.
low tones. But something wadays, a lot of work for only
her discomfiture. Madame as much to eat as he wanted.
insignificant woman, who, n politics, but she could see that
ceeded in being notoriously u ! And all through this strike
come forward with her litt to know that there were poor
four years of age, health night without having eaten a
merry. When the two ch shop was full of loaves. But
Fauchard began to laugh not? One cannot give away
while the opulent Julien because, you know, that would
rs.

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Lenfant assented.

"Yes, yes, every one must look after himself. That's right. Things come right when one takes pains to make them so. But, all the same, there are people who want to get too much."

Evariste, who was interested in Arsène and Olympe, had left the counter to do the honors of the shop for them; and, like a big boy of ten, he smiled complaisantly at the little girl of six, whose big round head and merry face attracted him.

"Give each of them a cake, Evariste," said handsome Madame Mitaine, who spoiled her son and brought him up lovingly.

And as Evariste began by giving a cake to Arsène, she cried, with a laugh:

"Oh! but that is not gallant, my darling; you should serve a lady first."

Then Evariste and Olympe, who had felt shy at first, quickly became friends. Ah! those dear little children—is there anything more lovely in this world? If they were wise, they would never grow up, as men do, to devour each other. And Lenfant went away, saying he hoped, all the same, to bring the brown flour later. Madame Mitaine, who had gone to the door, stood looking after them as they got into their vehicle and drove down the Rue de Brias. It was at that moment that Luc observed Madame Fauchard, still leading her little boy, go up to the baker's wife. She murmured a few words that he could not hear; probably she was asking for more credit, for suddenly Madame Mitaine, with a gesture that meant "yes," went back into the shop and gave her a large loaf of bread, which the poor thing carried off in haste, pressed close to her bosom.

Dacheux, exasperated and full of suspicion, had been looking on from the sidewalk opposite, and he cried out: "You will get robbed if you do like that! There have been some boxes of sardines stolen at Caffiaux's. They are stealing from everybody."

"Bah!" said Madame Mitaine, who had gone back to

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the entrance of her shop, "it is only rich people who are robbed."

Luc slowly went down the Rue de Brias, walking along in the crowd, which continued to increase. It seemed to him that there was terror in the air, as if a breath might suddenly stir to violence this sad and silent crowd of people. Then, as he reached the Mairie, he found Lenfant's cart there, standing at the street corner, before a hardware-store, a sort of bazaar kept by Laboque and his wife. The door being open he heard vehement bargaining going on between the peasant and the proprietor.

"Ah! blood and thunder! You want to sell everything at enormous prices. . . . Your spades, now; they have gone up two francs!"

"Hang it, Monsieur Lenfant, it is all because of this cursed strike; it is not our fault if the factories have stopped work, and if everything has been growing dear! . . . I am paying much more for iron, and I must make something, you know."

"Make something!—yes, but you need not double your prices. . . . You will break up your trade. One won't be able, before long, to buy a tool."

Laboque was a little, lean, dried-up man, with the eyes and the nose of a ferret, always in motion. He had a wife as tall as himself, sharp, dark, and with a prodigious turn for making money. Both had begun life by attending fairs, carrying round in a cart pitchforks, rakes, and saws. Ten years later they opened a little shop, and had managed to enlarge their business from year to year, until they found themselves at the head of a large establishment, carrying on a retail business between the neighboring factories and their smaller customers, to whom they sold, at a great profit, the products of the iron-works in the Pit, nails from the factory of Chodorge, sickles and scythes made by Hausser, tools and agricultural machines from the factory of the Mirandas. A gradual wastage of human strength and hard-earned money found its way into their hands, for they were honest tradespeople, who only appropriated what was considered proper in their

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line of business; and every night when they made up their accounts they rejoiced over the money they had amassed out of the wants of people who, as they said, were rusting for want of work, who were wasting their energies, like the wheels of an engine, whirling round and round without advancing when it is just going off the track.

So, while the peasant and the hardware-man were furiously quarrelling over a reduction of twenty sous, Luc again observed the children. There were two in the shop, a big boy of twelve, Auguste by name, who had a serious look on his face and was studying a lesson, and Eulalie, a little girl of five, sitting very quiet on a little chair, with a grave, kind look, as if she were forming her own opinion of the people who came in. From the moment the children entered, she seemed to take an interest in Arsène Lenfant, and probably liking his appearance, she addressed him with her little air of condescension. The two children were getting acquainted when a woman entered, bringing with her a fifth child. She was Babette, the wife of the puddler, Bourron; she was rosy and rotund, with a fund of gayety that nothing ever exhausted; she was holding by the hand her little daughter Marthe, a child of about four, as fat and merry as herself. At once she let go her mother's hand and ran up to Arsène Lenfant, whom she appeared to have known previously.

Babette's appearance cut short the bargaining between the hardware-man and the peasant; they came at once to an agreement, saying they would split the twenty sous. Babette brought back a saucepan she had bought the night before.

"It leaks, Monsieur Laboque. I found that out the moment I put it on the fire. I cannot keep a saucepan that leaks."

And while Laboque was examining it, grumbling, but at last deciding to exchange it, Madame Laboque was speaking of her children. She said they were as still as two earthen pots, neither moved all day, one sitting in her little chair, the other over his books. It was clear that

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she and Laboque must make money for them, for they did not take after their father and mother; they would never make much for themselves. Without listening to all this, Auguste Laboque was smiling to Marthe, and Eulalie Laboque was holding out her little hand to Arsène Lenfant, while the other child, Olympe, was quietly finishing the cake that Madame Mitaine's little boy had given her. All that was very pretty, very sweet; it seemed to breathe a fragrant hope for the future into the midst of the atmosphere of hatred and of strife that prevailed in the streets.

"I suppose you don't expect us to make money if we listen to the stories like that!" resumed Laboque, handing another saucepan to Babette. "There are no more good workmen; all slight their work—and you cannot imagine what losses there are in a business like ours. Anybody can come in here; it is like a country fair, with things exposed outside on the street. This very afternoon we had something stolen."

Lenfant, who was paying for his spade, turned round.

"Then it is really true, what I have heard about everybody's stealing?"

"What?—is it true? *We* don't steal, it is other people who rob us. . . . They have been two months on strike, and, having no money to buy with, they steal what they can get. . . . There—see—in this very house, not two hours ago, I had some knives and other things stolen. It is not pleasant to think of."

And he made a sudden gesture of disquiet, growing pale and shuddering as he pointed to the street, now filled with a menacing and dangerous crowd. It seemed as if he feared a sudden attack, an attack that would have bereft him of everything.

"Knives and things of that sort, you say?" repeated Babette, with her habitual laugh; "they can't eat knives and such things. What do you expect them to do with them? . . . You are like Caffiaux, just opposite, who is complaining that some one has carried off from his place a box of sardines. What street-boy would so much as taste them?"

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She was always happy, always sure that things in the end would turn out well. "That Caffiaux," she said, "is a fellow that all women ought to damn!" She had just seen her man, Bourron, go into his place with Ragu, and she was very certain that they would bring out little change from a five-franc piece if they took it in there. But, then, it was quite natural that a man should want a little amusement after having gone through so much trouble. And she took little Marthe again by the hand and went away much pleased with her nice, new saucepan.

"Now, don't you see," Laboque went on, explaining matters to the peasant, "that we need the protection of the soldiers? I am for giving a good lesson to these revolutionists. We want a stable government, which knows how to strike a blow and can make what is respectable respected."

Lenfant shook his head. His good sense made him hesitate to pronounce an opinion. He went away, taking Arsène and Olympe with him, and saying to himself:

"I only hope it will not turn out ill. . . . What things these tradespeople and workpeople are saying of each other!"

For some minutes Luc had been looking at Caffiaux's saloon, which occupied the other corner of the Rue de Brias, opposite the Mairie. Caffiaux and his wife had begun by keeping only a little shop where they sold groceries; now that shop had become very prosperous. It exhibited sacks, with their mouths open, boxes of preserves piled one upon another, and every kind of eatable, protected by nets from the fingers of marauders. Subsequently, the idea had struck them that they might as well set up a wine-shop. So they hired the building next door to them, and turned it into a saloon and restaurant. There they rapidly made money. The factories were near them, so was the Pit, and these consumed a frightful quantity of spirits. A constant stream of workmen passed in and went out of Caffiaux's place, especially on Saturdays, for Saturday was pay-day. Many stayed till late at night, got their meals there, and did not leave the

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place until they were dead drunk. Drink was their poison, and its seller the poisoner who destroyed men's brains and bodies. Luc suddenly thought he would go in and see what was going on there. It was a very easy matter. He had had no dinner, and had intended to dine somewhere in the town. How many times in Paris had not his fancy for knowing all about the working-classes, for looking into the causes of their poverty and their suffering, led him to pass hours in worse places.

Very quietly he seated himself at one of the small tables near the tin-covered bar; the room was large; there were about a dozen workmen standing around, drinking, while others, seated at the tables, were quaffing, shouting, and playing cards, in clouds of thick smoke from their pipes, in which smoke the gas-jets seemed to make only red patches. At his first glance, Luc recognized Ragu and Bourron, sitting opposite to each other, talking excitedly. They had begun by drinking a bottle, then they had ordered an omelette, sausages, and cheese, and after that so many quarts were drunk that both became very tipsy. But what most interested Luc was Caffiaux himself, who was standing near their table. Luc had ordered a slice of roast beef for himself; and, as he ate it, he was listening to the talk of the proprietor. Caffiaux was a big man, stout and smiling, with a sort of paternal face.

"Didn't I tell you strikers that if you had only stood out three days more you would have had your employers at your mercy, tied hand and foot? Good Heavens! You all know that I am with you—as indeed I am! Ah! yes, if you had not been in such a hurry you would have won the strike."

Ragu and Bourron, much excited, tapped him on the arm. Yes—yes—they knew him! They were convinced he was a good, true friend. But, all the same, it was too dreadful to keep on with the strike, and it had to come to an end some time.

"Employers will always be employers," stammered Ragu. "So what then? We had to accept their terms, and then give them as little as we could for their money.

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. . . Another quart, Caffiaux, and do you help us to drink it."

Caffiaux did not decline. He sat down. He was in favor of violent measures, because he had observed that his establishment, after every strike, grew more flourishing. Nothing makes men so prone to drink as quarrelling; a workman, when he is exasperated, is crazy for liquor; idleness and sullenness send many a man to the *cabaret*. Besides which, he profited in a crisis by being amiable and opening small credits with the wives of his customers; therefore he never refused a man a glass of liquor, being sure it would be paid for in the end, thus securing for himself the reputation of being a good fellow, while pushing to the last extremity of ruin the victims of the poison that he sold. Some people, indeed, said that Caffiaux, with his insinuating manners, was a traitor, a spy in the service of the managers of the Pit, who had orders to make men talk by dosing them with poison. It was by privation that the miserable wage-earner, without joy or pleasure in getting drunk, was first led into the *cabaret*, and then the *cabaret* ended by gradually reducing him to worthlessness and ruin. Caffiaux's establishment was a bad place, kept by a bad man, a place where he sold ruin and misery—a place which should have been rightly razed to the ground and its ruins swept away.

Luc, for one moment, had his attention distracted from the talk at the neighboring table by seeing the inner door of the grocery open, and a young girl, about fourteen, look in. It was Honorine, Caffiaux's daughter, small, dark, and delicate, with beautiful black eyes. She was never allowed to stay in the *cabaret*. She served in the grocery, and she now appeared only to call her mother, who was serving wine at the counter. Madame Caffiaux was a large woman, smiling and motherly, while her husband was smiling and paternal. All these sharp, selfish tradespeople seemed to have handsome, healthy children. Would these children end by becoming, in their turn, sharp, selfish, and cruel?

Suddenly a sad sight appeared in this vile place.

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Among its poisonous smells and its thick smoke, in the midst of a violent quarrel which had broken out at the bar, Luc saw Josine. She was standing there, so smoke-enshrouded, so absorbed in what she had come to do, that he at first hardly recognized her. She must have slipped into the *cabaret,* leaving Nanet at the door. Trembling and hesitating, she stood behind Ragu, who did not see her, as his back was towards her, and Luc was able for a moment to observe how worn was her once rosy face, yet soft and sweet, half shaded by her ragged shawl. But one thing that he had not seen before, when he stood by her at the Pit, now struck him; her right hand, which was no longer holding her skirts, seemed to be bandaged down to the wrist, the dressing, probably, of some wound.

Josine had at last summoned up her courage. She had looked in at the window and seen Ragu seated at a table. She now came forward with her poor, little, weak tread, and put her little girlish hand upon his shoulder. But he, insensible from drink, did not feel her touch, and she had to shake him before he turned round.

"By thunder!—is that you again? What have you come sneaking in here for?"

He struck his fist upon the table, and all the wine bottles and glasses rattled.

"I had to come, since you will not come home," she answered, turning very pale and half closing her great, frightened eyes, in expectation of a brutal blow.

But Ragu was no longer listening to her; he was furious; he was acting to a gallery of his comrades.

"I am going to do just whatever I please, and I won't have a woman spying upon me, do you hear? I am my own master, and I'll stay here just as long as I think proper."

"Then," said she, wildly, "give me the key. At least, don't let me pass the night in the streets."

"The key!—the key!" howled the man. "You are asking, are you, for the key?"

And in a burst of savage fury he sprang up, seized her by her wounded hand, and dragged her across the room towards the outer door.

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"Don't I tell you I have done with you—that I want no more of you? . . . Go and see if the key is in the street!"

Josine, staggering and bewildered, gave a sharp cry of pain.

"Oh! how you hurt me!"

By the violence of his grasp the dressing on her right hand had been wrenched off; the bandage was at once reddened with a large stain of blood, which did not prevent the man, who was now beside himself with liquor, from opening the front door wide and pushing the woman into the street. Then, when he had come back to the table, and had dropped into a chair before his glass, he stammered, with a hoarse laugh:

"Ah! well—if one listened to women, one would have mighty little pleasure!"

Luc, now beside himself, and furious at what he had seen, clinched his fists, ready to come to blows with Ragu. But he bethought himself of the row that would ensue if he attacked those tipsy brutes. Half stifled in this horrible place, he made haste to pay for what he had had to eat, while Caffiaux, who had taken his wife's place at the bar, tried to smooth things over by saying, with his paternal air, that, all the same, some women had no tact. "What can you expect to get out of a man who has drunk a glass or two?" Without answering him, Luc hurried into the street, breathing more freely in the open air. He looked round in all directions, pushing through the crowds, for his one idea when he left the *cabaret* so quickly had been to overtake Josine, to help her, not to let her die of hunger, not to let her perish without shelter on this dark, tempestuous night. But in vain he hurried up the Rue de Brias, and came back to the open space before the Mairie, in vain he forced his way among the groups of people; Josine and Nanet had completely disappeared. No doubt, dreading pursuit, they had hidden themselves somewhere; the rain, the wind, and the darkness seemed to have swallowed them up.

What frightful poverty, what execrable suffering! and

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it all arose out of labor—labor misused, corrupted, turned into a vile fermentation that rotted everything. And Luc, with a bleeding heart and a brain seething with dark forebodings, went on walking in the sordid and now threatening crowd which kept increasing every moment in the Rue de Brias. He again became conscious that there was terror in the air, something indefinable which was felt by all of them, the result of the recent class struggle—a struggle which had never really come to an end, but which, as all men knew, would recommence at the first opportunity. The resumption of work had made peace only for a time; the strikers had given way, but under their resignation there was a sort of low growl, a silent thirst for revenge. They had eyes in which cruelty was not extinct, but was ready to flame forth again. On both sides of the street were *cabarets* crowded with people; liquor was swallowing up the workmen's pay, exhaling its poison on the very air of the street, while the shops in which provisions were sold were also full, their proprietors making the iniquitously large percentage that retail dealers exact from the scanty funds with which poor women hope to feed their households. Everywhere the starving working-class was being preyed upon, devoured, or crushed under the wheels of the great social grinding machine, whose teeth became sharper when it ran off the track. And Beauclair, in its mud, and under its flaring gas-lights, was full of a crowd wandering blindly, like sheep without a shepherd, towards a precipice—on the eve of some great catastrophe.

In the crowd Luc recognized several persons whom he had seen the previous spring, the first time he had been in Beauclair. The authorities were all there, no doubt dreading some outbreak. He saw Gourier, the mayor, walking with the sub-prefect, Châtelard. The former, as a man of property, felt uneasy, and would have liked to see the soldiers called out; but the other, with better sense, for he was a man who had had some experience in Paris, thought it wiser to trust to the gendarmes.

Judge Gaume, too, was there, and with him was the half-pay captain Jollivet, who was going to marry his

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daughter. When they reached Laboque's place they stopped to bow to the Mazelles, former tradespeople, who had gained their fortune quickly, and had been admitted into the good society of the little town. All these people talked in low tones to one another; they all looked anxious; they gave side-glances at the awkward workmen who, as it was Saturday, thronged the street. As Luc passed near them he heard the Mazelles, like others, talking about theft and looking as if they were asking questions of the judge and the captain. Gossip on this subject ran from mouth to mouth, telling about the five-franc piece taken from Dacheux's counter, and the box of sardines carried off from the stall of Caffiaux; but, above all, the knives for paring leather that had been stolen from Laboque led to the most discussion. The general feeling of fear spread even among sensible people. Were the revolutionists arming?—had they laid plans for a massacre that night, that stormy night, when all was so black and dark in Beauclair? The miserable strike had disorganized everything. Hunger had made the poor unruly, the liquor sold in drinking-places made them mad for loot and murder. And thus all along the filthy, muddy street, and along the greasy sidewalks, all the poison and degradation of labor, the labor of the many used iniquitously for the advantage of a few, streamed onward—labor dishonored, hateful, and accursed, the labor that entails terrible suffering, besides theft and prostitution, which are its monstrous excrescences. Pale girls passed by who had been workwomen at the factories, had there been seduced, and then had sunk into the gutter; now, sordid and unhappy, they would be sought as companions by the drunken and dissolute. A feeling of intolerable pity, of revolt, part anger and part grief, took possession of Luc. Where could Josine be?—into what dark corner had she shrunk, with little Nanet? Then suddenly there was loud talking in the street; a wave of excitement seemed to have passed over the crowd; it became agitated and noisy. It almost seemed as if an attack were going to be made upon the shops; as if the crowd had looted the provisions set out

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upon the stalls before the windows. Gendarmes came running up, scampering to the fray; there was a noise from their heavy boots and the clink of their sabres. "What was it?" "What had happened?" every one asked everybody. Questions flew about in the air; the terror increased; the answers were incoherent and contradictory.

At last Luc heard one of the Mazelles, who had been to see what the matter was, and had come back, say:

"It's a boy who stole a loaf of bread."

And now the violent and savage crowd came tearing down the street. The thing must have happened farther up the Rue de Brias, somewhere near Mitaine's bakery. Women screamed; an old man fell down and had to be picked up. A big gendarme, running in haste through the crowd, knocked down two persons.

Luc, too, began to run, carried away by the general excitement. And as he hurried on he passed Judge Gaume, who was saying, in his slow, measured voice, to Captain Jollivet:

"It is a child who has stolen a loaf of bread."

This sentence was repeated everywhere, accentuated by the gallop of the running crowd. But there was so much crowding and pushing that nothing could be seen. The shop-keepers, with pale faces, standing in their doorways, seemed about to put up their shutters. A jeweller was removing the watches from his window. There was a great crush round the big gendarme, who was elbowing his way to the scene of action. And Luc, near whom were running the mayor and the sub-prefect, Gourier and Châtelard, again caught the words, uttered this time with a sort of sad accent and a little shudder:

"It's a child who has stolen a loaf of bread."

Then Luc, who had made his way towards the bakery in the wake of the big gendarme, saw him pushing forward to help a comrade, a tall, thin man, who was holding tightly by the wrist a boy five or six years old. Luc at once recognized Nanet, with his light, touzled hair, who was still holding his head high with the resolute air of a little man. He had just stolen a loaf from those displayed

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in the open window of handsome Madame Mitaine. The theft was undeniable, for Nanet was still clasping the loaf, almost as tall as himself; and it had actually been this trumpery childish theft which had convulsed and excited the whole Rue de Brias. People passing who had seen him take the loaf had denounced him to the gendarme, who hastened to the spot, but the boy had disappeared, running fast in and out of the groups upon the street, to the great indignation of the gendarme, who very possibly felt that a storm was brewing that might raise into revolt all the population of Beauclair. However, law and order triumphed, and he brought back the culprit to the place where the theft had been committed.

"Here's the boy who stole the bread," repeated many voices.

Madame Mitaine, much surprised by the commotion, had come, like other shop-keepers, to her front door. She was quite confounded when the gendarme, addressing her, said:

"Here, madame, is the little wretch who has just robbed you of this great big loaf."

And, shaking Nanet, he tried to frighten him by saying, "Now, then, you are going to prison. . . . Say, why did you steal that loaf of bread?"

But the little fellow was not abashed. He answered clearly, in his flute-like voice:

"I have had nothing to eat since yesterday; neither has my sister."

By this time Madame Mitaine had recovered herself. She looked at the little chap with her fine eyes, full of indulgent kindness. "Poor little mite," she thought, "and his sister—where has he left her?"

For one moment the good woman hesitated, and a slight blush reddened her cheeks. Then, with the kindly smile of a beautiful woman, admired and esteemed by all her customers, she said, calmly and pleasantly:

"You have made a mistake, gendarme. He did not steal that loaf. I gave it to him."

The gendarme stood confronting her with his mouth

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open, but he did not let go of Nanet. Ten people, at least, had seen the boy take the loaf and run off with it. At that moment Dacheux, the butcher, who had run across the street, took part in the affair. He was in a furious passion.

"I saw him myself," he cried. "I just happened to be looking this way. He snatched the biggest one, and then away he ran. As sure as some one stole a five-franc piece from me the day before yesterday, and that people have been stealing to-day from Laboque and Caffiaux, this vermin of a child stole that loaf from you, Madame Mitaine. . . . You can't tell me he did not."

Still blushing for her falsehood, Madame Mitaine repeated it. She said, softly:

"You make a mistake, neighbor. I gave the boy this loaf. He did not steal it."

And as Dacheux grew very angry with her, telling her that this sort of thing would end by having them all robbed and murdered, the sub-prefect, Châtelard, who, with a prudent eye, had looked upon the scene, went up to the gendarme and made him loose his grip on Nanet, to whom he said, in a voice low as a mute's:

"Be off at once, boy."

The crowd was beginning to murmur and grow angry. "Hadn't the baker's wife said she gave the child the loaf? Poor little chap!—not as high as my boot, who has had nothing to eat all day." Shouts and hisses arose, when suddenly a voice of thunder rose above all other noises.

"Blood and thunder! is it brats not six years old who to-day are to set us an example? The child was right. He who is starving may take anything. Yes, everything in these shops belongs to us, and it is because you are cowards that you are starving!"

The crowd was as agitated as is water in a pond when a stone is thrown into it. Questions at once were asked. "Who is he? Who is he?" "It is Lange, the potter; it is Lange!" Luc then saw in the middle of groups which were drawing back from him a short, sturdy man, about five-and-twenty, with a square head bristling with

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black hair and a black beard. His look was that of a rustic; but his eyes were full of intelligence; he spoke with his hands in his pockets, and with occasional poetic flights, like an unformed poet, crying aloud his dreams.

"Food, money, houses, clothing, are all ours. We have been robbed of them; we have the right to take them back. Not to-morrow, but this very evening, we ought to enter into possession of the land, the mines, the factories, and all Beauclair, if we were men enough to accomplish it. There are not two ways; there is but one; and that is to overthrow the whole edifice, to destroy all authority by the axe, so that the people, to whom everything belongs, may reconstruct society."

He frightened the women. Men, alarmed by the aggressive vehemence of his words, heard him in silence, and then drew away, apprehensive of consequences. Few understood him. The greater part were not prepared for such revolt; they were too much crushed as wage-earners. What was the use of such talk? They would suffer from hunger all the same, and he would go to prison.

"Oh, I know you do not dare," went on Lange, in a stream of contemptuous raillery. "But there will be plenty of people who will dare, some day. They will blow up your Beauclair, unless it has fallen before that time of its own rottenness. You have no noses; you cannot smell, this very night, how everything is putrid, and all, like vile carrion, is in a state of decomposition. All is good for nothing but for manure, and we have no need of a great prophet to foretell a mighty wind which will carry away this town, and all its robbers, all its murderers—I mean our masters. . . . Let it crumble! let it burst! Death to it all, I say!"

The scandal became so great that the sub-prefect, Châtelard, though he disapproved of interference, felt he must do something to stop this address. Some one had to be arrested. The gendarmes flung themselves on Lange, and carried him off down a side-street that was dark and deserted, and there at length their tramp was no longer heard. The sub-prefect was aware that in the crowd that

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had listened to him there was not much sympathy, and was satisfied that any movement to support him had been quickly suppressed. The audience dispersed, and the crowd resumed its slow and silent procession, in the black mud, from one end of the street to the other.

But Luc shuddered; the prophetic threat of the orator seemed to be the sequence of all the horrible things that he had seen and heard since dusk upon that day. So much wickedness and misery seemed to call for that last catastrophe which he, too, had felt was brooding over the horizon, like a revengeful cloud which held fire to burn and blot out Beauclair. He was pained, for he had a horror of violence. What!—could the potter be right? Would nothing but violence, robbery, and murder bring back justice? Quite overcome by these thoughts, he fancied that he saw pass before him, as a vision, among the hard, dark faces of the workmen, the pale countenances of Mayor Gourier, Judge Gaume, and Captain Jollivet. Then came the faces of the two Mazelles, pallid with terror; all seemed to pass before him under a glare of gas-light. The street seemed horrible. His one idea now was to administer pity and consolation. He would overtake Nanet; he would follow him and find out in what dark corner Josine had found refuge.

Nanet walked on and on, with all the spirit he could put into his little legs. And Luc, who had seen him run off up the Rue de Brias, in the direction of the Pit, soon caught up with him, for the poor, dear child had great difficulty in getting along with his big loaf of bread. He held it against his breast with both arms, being much afraid of dropping it, fearing, too, lest some cruel man or some big dog might snatch it from him. When he heard the steps of Luc coming up fast behind him, he was assailed by a dreadful fear, and tried to run. But, having looked behind him, he recognized, by the light from one of the nearest shops, the gentleman who had smiled at him and his sister; so he felt reassured, and let himself be overtaken.

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"Shall I carry your loaf for you?" asked the young man.

"Oh no; I'll keep it. I am so glad to have it."

By this time they were on the high-road outside of Beauclair, in all the darkness of a heavy, stormy sky. Far in the distance they could perceive the lights of the Pit; and Luc heard the little footfalls of the boy going pit-a-pat in the mud, while he clasped the loaf more tightly and raised it above his head, that it might not get muddy.

"Do you know where you are going?"

"Oh, of course."

"Is it far from here?"

"No, not very."

Nanet had been assailed by a vague fear; he walked on more slowly. Why should the gentleman want to know? The little man, who felt himself to be the sole protector of his big sister, tried to be careful and cunning. But Luc, understanding what was passing in his mind, and wishing to convince him that he was a friend, picked him up suddenly in his arms, at a moment when the little fellow, with his short legs, came near tumbling into a mud-puddle.

"Houp la! Look out, my little man, if you don't want to butter your bread with mud."

This speech conquered little Nanet, who had felt the genial warmth of those strong, brotherly arms. He burst into a hearty, childish laugh, and at once began familiarly to *tutoyer* his new friend.

"Oh! thou art strong, and gentle, too," he said.

And he trotted along beside this friend, without any further anxiety.

But where could Josine have got to? The road went on and on. Luc fancied that he recognized Josine waiting motionless in the shadow of every tree-trunk. They drew near the Pit. The blows of the great steam-hammer seemed to shake the earth, while all around was lighted by a cloud of fire and smoke, shot through by electric rays. Nanet, without going past the works, turned on

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to the bridge and crossed the Mionne, so that Luc found himself brought back nearly to the place where he had first seen them that evening. Then, suddenly, the child started into a brisk run, and Luc lost sight of him, but he heard him crying out with a joyous laugh:

"Here, sister! Here, sister! Just see what I've got for you! Isn't it grand?"

At the end of the bridge the bank went steeply down to the Mionne, and a bench had been placed there under a palisade opposite to the Pit, which was smoking and buzzing on the other side of the river. Luc, in the darkness, had nearly fallen over the palisade, when he heard the boy's laughter change to screams and tears. He recovered himself, and understood Nanet's outcries when he saw Josine lying on the bench in a swoon. She had come there, and had dropped down faint with hunger and suffering. She had let her little brother leave her alone, not comprehending what, with the boldness of a street gamin, he was planning to do to aid her. And now, when he came back, he found her as cold as death. In despair, he broke into great sobs.

"Oh, sister! wake up! Here is something to eat. Eat, sister. I have got some bread."

Tears came into Luc's eyes. So much misery, such a frightful destiny, such privation and sorrow to have fallen to the lot of beings so helpless, so brave, and so interesting! He ran quickly to the Mionne, dipped his handkerchief in the water, and came back with it to bathe the temples of Josine. Happily the night, bad as the weather was, was not cold. Then he took the poor girl's hands in his and rubbed them. At last she sighed. She appeared to be awakening from a hideous dream. But she had been so overcome by her long unconsciousness that nothing seemed to astonish her. It seemed natural that her brother should be there with his big loaf, and even that he should be accompanied by the tall, handsome gentleman, whom she recognized. Perhaps she fancied that it was the gentleman who had brought her the bread. Her poor, weak fingers were not able to break the crust; he had to help

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her. He broke the bread into little bits and gave them to her slowly, one at a time, that she might not choke herself in her haste to still her terrible hunger. Then her tender body, worn and pitiful, began to tremble, and she wept uncontrollably, eating all the while, and moistening every mouthful with her tears. She had the voracity, the eagerness, of some half-starved animal which can hardly swallow but is in haste to eat. Gently, with an aching heart, almost beside himself with pity, Luc held her hands and went on feeding her. Never afterwards could he forget that communion of suffering and kindness, that bread of life given to the most miserable and attractive of God's creatures.

Nanet, in the mean time, breaking off his share of the loaf, ate like a little ogre. He was proud of his exploit, and was much astonished to see his sister crying. Why should she cry now, when they were having such a feast? Then, when he had finished, quite amazed at having had a full repast, he all of a sudden fell against his sister and slept the happy sleep of little children who go to rest exchanging smiles with the angels. And Josine, pressing him to her side with her right arm, recovered herself a little and leaned against the back of the bench, while Luc sat by her side, unwilling to leave her there all night with the sleeping child. He had begun to comprehend that if her movements had appeared somewhat awkward, it arose from her wounded hand, round which she had retwisted, as well as she could, the bandage spotted with blood. He began a conversation by asking her:

"Have you hurt yourself?"

"Yes, monsieur, a machine for stitching women's boots broke one of my fingers. It had to be amputated. It was all my own fault, the assistant manager said, but Monsieur Gourier made them give me fifty francs."

She spoke in a somewhat low voice, very sweet, and, it seemed to him, with something of shame in it from time to time.

"Then you worked at the shoe-factory of Monsieur Gourier, the mayor?"

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"Yes, monsieur, I went into it when I was fifteen, and now I am eighteen. My mother worked there more than twenty years; but she is dead now. I am quite alone. I have nobody but my little brother, Nanet, who is six. My name is Josine."

And she went on to tell him all her story, and Luc had only to put a few questions to learn the pitiful, too-common history of so many poor girls. A father who went off with another woman; a mother who remained with four children to support, and who had had hard work to feed them, though she had had the good-fortune to lose two of them; and when the mother died of overwork and anxiety, the daughter became a mother to the little boy who was left when she was only sixteen. In her turn she was killing herself with work, without always managing to make enough to buy bread sufficient for both of them. At last—it is almost always the sad story of such women—a seducer appeared—Ragu, handsome and manly, was a man who knew how to conquer the hearts of women—and on his arm, alas! she used to take walks every Sunday after the dance. He made so many promises, she thought she was to marry him; she thought that she would have a nice little home of her own, where she could bring up her little brother, together with the children that might come to them. Her only fault was that she yielded to him one evening in the woods behind Guerdache. She herself had hardly known to what she then consented. That was six months ago. She afterwards committed a second fault in going to live with Ragu, who after that ceased to speak to her of marriage. Then she had met with the accident at the shoe-factory. She could not go on with her work just at the very time of the strike, and this made Ragu so terrible, so cruel, that he used to beat her, saying that she was the cause of his poverty and suffering. And so things had gone on from bad to worse, until now he had flung her out on to the street, and would not even let her have the key, that she might go home and sleep with Nanet.

One thought troubled Luc.

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"If you had had a child," he said, "that might have attached him more to you, and in the end he might have married you."

She gave an exclamation, and made a gesture of terror.

"A child!—his child!" she cried. "Oh no! that would have been the worst of all. . . . As he often used to say, 'I'll have no string tied to my paw.' He would not have any child. He took care of that. . . . His idea is, that when two people take up with each other, they do so only so long as pleasure lasts, and then, when that is over, good-bye—good-night—and that's the end."

Again there was silence. They said no more. The certainty that she had never been a mother, that she never would bear children to that man, gave Luc, full as his heart was of sad pity, a curious feeling of pleasure—a sort of comfort, the reason for which he could not understand. Confused feelings seemed to stir within him, while into the darkness and the distance his eyes wandered. He saw the gorge of Brias as he had seen it that evening in the dusk; now it was all in darkness. The two Monts Bleuses rose up on either side, with their rocks and cliffs, and darkness deepened round them. Behind him or beside him, every now and then, he heard the noise of a train which slackened its speed, whistled, and stopped at a station. Below him, at his feet, he could see the Mionne. Its waters, of an unwholesome green, dashed up against the chains and wooden beams that held the bridge. Then, to his left, he saw the gorge opening out between the mountains and lost in the great plain of Roumagne, which black night and the tempest seemed to convert into a dark and shoreless sea beyond, the shadowy islet of Beauclair, which was still lighted—starred, as it were—by little gas-jets that shone like sparks. But his eyes kept turning constantly to the Pit, which he saw before him. It seemed to him the type of something savage, with its clouds of smoke, partially illumined by the electric lights in the yards. Through door openings, from time to time, could be seen the red throats of the furnaces, or blinding jets

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of fusing metal would start forth in vast red, terrible flames, the fires of a lesser hell, which, devouring and unquiet, burned in the bowels of the monster. The earth trembled all around. The rhythmic beat of the hammers never ceased, nor did the roar of the machinery, nor the powerful strokes of the great steam-hammers, sounding like a cannonade heard from afar.

And Luc, with his eyes filled with all this, and his heart sore with pity as he thought of the probable destiny of Josine, who was seated beside him on the bench, so forlorn and so forsaken, seemed to hear in these confused noises the destruction of labor—labor disorganized, dishonored, and accursed. His evening stroll had ended by his being brought face to face with the extreme misery of the poor young creature beside him, the disasters everywhere caused by the strike, the cruel selfishness of the tradespeople; all hearts and heads seemed poisoned with hate; alcohol seemed to have become a necessity for men, who wished to find forgetfulness; theft seemed to be made legitimate by hunger; society was going to pieces under the weight of its accumulated wrongs. And in his ears rang the voice of Lange, prophesying the final catastrophe which would wipe out this Beauclair, corrupting and corrupted. Especially he seemed to see before him pale girls wandering on the streets, the wretched creatures so common in industrial cities—the lowest class of prostitutes, brought down to that pass from having been the prettiest workwomen in the factories. Would Josine ever come to that? First seduced, then on the streets, then the victim of drunkards—making a rapid descent into the mire. He felt that she was gentle and submissive, one of those tender, loving creatures that so easily become the prey of the strong. And the thought of leaving her upon that bench, of not striving to save her from so horrible a destiny, excited him to such a pitch that it seemed to him that he should die if he did not stretch out a hand of brotherly kindness to help her.

"See here—you cannot sleep upon this bench, you and this child," he said. "That man must take you back just

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for to-night. We will see about it afterwards. . . . Where do you live?"

"Near here, in old Beauclair, Rue des Trois Lunes."

Then she explained to him that Ragu lived in a house where he had three rooms. The house belonged to his sister, named Adèle. She lived there, too; everybody called her La Toupe,* though no one seemed to know exactly why. Josine suspected that, if Ragu really had not the key about him, he might have given it to La Toupe, who was a terrible woman, and very hard on poor girls. But when Luc spoke of going quietly to this fury and asking her if she had the key, Josine shuddered.

"Oh no; don't go to her. She hates me. . . . If you could fall in with her husband, now, who is a good man. . . . But I know he is at work to-night in the Pit. He is a master-puddler, and his name is Bonnaire."

"Bonnaire?" repeated Luc, who thought he remembered the name. "Why, I saw him last spring, when I was here at Beauclair. I went to the Pit. I talked a long time with him, and he explained things to me. He was a very intelligent fellow, and he certainly seemed to me a worthy man. . . . It will all be easy now. I will go at once and talk over your case with him."

Josine gave a cry expressive of ardent gratitude. She was trembling all over; her poor hands were clasped in an effort to express bodily her thankfulness.

"Oh, monsieur, how good you are! and how much I thank you!"

A red gleam came from the Pit, which enabled Luc to see her as she sat there bareheaded, the ragged woollen shawl having fallen on her shoulders. She was not crying now; her blue eyes were bright with tenderness and her little mouth had recovered its youthful smile. Supple, slender, graceful, she had kept a look of childhood in her face; her expression was naturally open and gay. Her long, light hair, the color of ripe grain, had become unknotted at her neck, and made her look young, honest,

* One bold as brass.

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and forsaken. And Luc, struck by the infinite charm there was about her, by degrees yielded to its influence, and felt an emotion of astonishment in seeing anything so womanly and lovely suddenly emerge out of the poverty-stricken creature he had first seen ill-clad, frightened, and in tears. She looked up at him with such adoration, she gave herself up to him so confidingly, feeling herself a poor creature whom he had helped, and who could not but love him. So good, so handsome he appeared to her, so like a god after her experience of the brutalities of Ragu, that she could have kissed his very footprints. She stood before him with clasped hands, the left one holding the right, which had been injured, its bandage still spotted with blood. And a tie, very sweet and very strong, was in those moments formed between them, a bond of infinite tenderness and of infinite affection.

"Nanet will go with you to the Pit. He knows every corner of it."

"No, no. I know my way. . . . Don't wake him; he will keep you warm. Wait quietly here till I come back, both of you."

He left her seated on the bench, with the sleeping boy, in the dark night. And as he left her a bright light illuminated the cliffs of the Monts Bleuses on the right, and over the park of La Crêcherie, where Jordan's house stood. Luc could see the dark outline of the blast-furnace built on the side of the mountain. Workmen were running off the molten metal, and all the rocks around Beauclair and the roofs of its houses were lighted up by it as if by a red aurora.

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II

BONNAIRE, the master-puddler, one of the best workmen in the factory, had played a great part in the recent strike. Having read the Paris papers, with a just appreciation of what they contained, and with a heart moved by the injustice inflicted upon wage-earners, he was going through a course of revolutionary instruction, in which there were many omissions, to be sure, but which had made him a warm partisan of the system of co-operation. Besides, as he often said, with the good sense of a man both healthy and industrious, that dream was one which would some day be realized, but, in the mean time, all they had to do was to try and obtain as much justice as possible, that their fellow-workpeople might suffer less acutely.

For some time previous to the strike, it had seemed to him inevitable. Three years before the Pit had been nearly wrecked in the hands of Michel Qurignon, the son of Monsieur Jérôme; then his son-in-law, Boisgelin, an idle, flashy gentleman from Paris, who had married his daughter Suzanne, took it into his head to buy the iron and steel works, and by the advice of Delaveau, a certain poor cousin, he invested in the enterprise what remained of his fortune. Delaveau made a contract to make the works pay thirty per cent. on the capital invested; and for three years, being himself a good engineer and a man of great industry, he had kept his promise by means of first-rate organization and the closest supervision over the smallest details of the workshops, insisting on maintaining the very strictest discipline among his workmen. One of the causes of Michel Qurignon's bad business was a disaster that befell the market for metals in France, when the

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manufacture of rails and other iron used in the construction of railroads ceased to pay, because of a discovery in the North and East of a chemical process which enabled manufacturers to utilize vast deposits of ores which up to then had been discarded as being too impure. The iron and steel works of Beauclair could no longer contend against the cheaper rates at which the Northern and Eastern factories sold their products. Ruin stared them in the face. Even Delaveau was convinced that he must make great changes; must give up the manufacture of rails and frame-work, which the North and East could furnish for twenty centimes (four cents) per kilogramme, and confine himself to smaller things which required more skill and care, or to shells, mortars, and cannon. Prosperity came back to the Pit after this decision. The money that Boisgelin put into it brought him a considerable revenue. Only it had been necessary to put in new machinery, to engage more skilful workmen, men who gave better attention to their work, and therefore required to be better paid.

The ostensible cause of the strike was this increase of some men's salaries. The workmen had been paid by the piece, so much the hundred kilogrammes, and Delaveau himself had admitted the necessity of a new scale of wages. But he wished to remain absolute master of the situation, and not to appear to give way to the demands of his workmen. He had made up his mind on certain things, and, being naturally arbitrary and obstinate, he resolved to take a firm stand as to what he deemed his rights, but at the same time to be just to his people, though he denounced a division of the profits as a dangerous dream. He told them that such utopias could not but result in some terrible catastrophe, and the quarrel between him and the little world of workers over whom he ruled was aggravated on the day when Bonnaire set on foot a syndicate for defence; for although Delaveau was not opposed to long-service pensions, life insurance, or insurance in case of sickness, nay, even a certain percentage upon the sales, for he recognized that the workman had

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the right to improve his condition, he was violently opposed to unions, to societies intended to uphold special interests, and stand ready for united action. Thus the strife began. Delaveau, with a very bad grace, adopted a revision of the scale of prices; he felt it was time for him to take up arms and to announce to the Pit that it was in a state of siege. Since he had assumed the mastership the workmen complained that they had no individual liberty. They were closely watched, as to their actions and their very thoughts, even when they were not in the works. Those who would consent to be humble and to flatter the manager — to be, possibly, spies upon the others — gained his favor, while those men who were proud and independent were treated as dangerous. And as the chief, who by instinct was the defender of things as they were, confessedly desired to employ no men who did not agree with him, the engineers, the firemen, and the superintendents became very particular in the matter of obedience, and what they called a good spirit among the men.

Bonnaire, who thus met with obstacles to his ideas of justice and of liberty, naturally found himself at the head of the dissatisfied party. It was he who, with a few comrades, went to see Delaveau to make known their demands. He spoke very frankly to him, put him out of temper, and they failed to obtain the increase of salary that they had requested. Delaveau did not believe in the possibility of a general strike in his works, for workers in metal are not easily aroused to action; there had not been a strike in the Pit for many years, while they were common among the workers in the coal-mines of Brias. And when this general strike took place, contrary to his expectations, and, one morning, only two hundred men out of one thousand came to work, and he had to close the works, he became so very angry that it was no longer possible to make any terms with him. He began by discharging Bonnaire and all the members of the union when their delegates ventured again to come and speak with him. He would be master in his own house, he said; the

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quarrel was between his workmen and himself, and he intended to settle it with his men without the intervention of any league or union. Bonnaire went back again to see him, accompanied by only three comrades. But all they got was a remonstrance, statements and calculations going to prove that the manager would compromise the prosperity of the Pit if he increased their wages. Money had been furnished him, an establishment had been given him to look after, and his first duty was to see that the works prospered and that the capital brought in the interest that was expected of it. Of course, he would very much wish to be kind and considerate; but he looked upon himself as a perfectly honest man, and therefore it was only right that he should fulfil his engagements, and so manage the business that it should bring in the most money possible. The rest was all a dream, a vain hope, a future utopia, something very dangerous. And it was after such talks that the disastrous strike took place, and lasted two months, to the injury of the wage-earners as well as to their employers, aggravating the poverty of the workmen, while the machinery was becoming rusted and greatly injured. Then the strike ended by some mutual concessions. Manager and workmen agreed on a new scale of prices. But, a week later, Delaveau refused to take back certain men whom he called ringleaders, among whom was Bonnaire. He was much embittered against this man, although he knew him to be one of his best workmen, sober and skilful. At last, however, he yielded, and took him back with the others, though he declared that this was forcing his hand, that he was made to do what was contrary to his conscience, but that he did it for the sake of peace.

From that day forth Bonnaire felt himself on the blacklist of the manager. At first he would not accept a concession so offered; he declined to return to work with the others. But his fellow-workers, who were much attached to him, declared that if he would not go back they would still stay on strike; so he gave in, that he might not be the cause of a new trouble. His fellow-workmen had suffered enough, he thought, and his resolution was taken;

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he would offer himself as a sacrifice—the only sacrifice—provided no one else bore the penalty of an only half-won victory. That was why he went back to work on Thursday, but with the resolution that he would quit on Sunday, feeling that his stay in the Pit was no longer possible. He told no one what he intended; he had only informed the manager on Saturday morning that he should quit that evening, and the reason he stayed in the Pit that night was because there was a piece of work begun that he wished to see finished. He wanted to leave his work honorably.

Luc gave his name to the *concierge,* and asked if he could speak at once with Bonnaire, the master-puddler. The *concierge,* with a gesture, signed to him to go into that part of the works where the puddlers were and those who worked at the rolling-mill, at the end of the second court-yard to the left. These yards, deluged by recent rains, were wretched places, with their paving-stones displaced, and their entanglement of rails, along which a junction train was passing from the works to the station at Beauclair. Under the moonlike rays of the electric lights, through the shadows thrown by the sheds, the tower for tempering newly forged cannon, the cementation kilns, and all kinds of other conical constructions devoted to this barbarous worship of the god of gain, a little locomotive was slowly moving, uttering shrill whistles, that it might not run over any one. But ever since Friday evening the shingling-hammers had been deafening. These two hammers, located in a kind of cellar, whence they thrust out their heads like those of some fierce, wild beasts from their dens, had gone on with their rhythmic beat, had cut the sheets of metal into lengths, and had drawn it out into bars, with the terrible strength of their iron teeth. The workmen who were on the spot, who run the metal from the furnaces, were silent, speaking by gesture, not by words, in this continual throbbing of everything around them.

Luc, after having skirted a long building, where other hammers were at work, turned to the left through the sec-

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ond court-yard, which was littered with rejected pieces of metal, lying in the mud until they should be put back into the smelting-furnace. Men were loading a car with a great piece of machinery, something to be used by a torpedo-boat destroyer, which had been finished that very morning, and which the little locomotive was to carry away. And as it steamed up whistling, Luc had to dodge it, and by following a path that seemed to lead between the rails and the smelting-furnaces, he found himself at last in a building where there were many furnaces, many puddlers, and many men to run off the molten metal.

This building, one of the largest in the place, was never silent; by day it had a fearful hum of working machinery. But at this time of the night the machinery was silent. More than half the great place was in utter darkness; and, out of ten puddling furnaces, four only were lighted. These were provided with two hammers of less power.

Here and there feeble gas-jets wavered in the wind, the light of which was just enough to show great shadows in the place, and, overhead, immense smoke-stained beams that sustained the roof could be indistinctly made out. A noise of splashing water could be heard in the darkness; the earth floor, with cracks and lumps in it, was in some places a sodden mass of fetid mud, in others it was all coal-dust, and everywhere it was covered with rubbish. The whole place was an example of the filth and disorder induced by grinding labor, labor without care, without mirth—labor hated and execrated by those engaged in it, carried on in a den full of smoke, black smuts flying about in the air, in a place filthy and dilapidated.

In some little sheds made of rough planks the outdoor clothes of the workmen were hung up on nails, and with them were thick cloth jackets and leathern aprons. This miserable, dark place was never lighted unless a master-puddler opened the door of his furnace and sent forth a blinding rush of flame, which illumined the whole dark building for a moment like a ray of light from some planet in the heavens.

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When Luc presented himself, Bonnaire was just finishing puddling two hundred kilogrammes of the molten iron which furnace and labor were to convert into steel. The whole operation took four hours, and the hardest work was the puddling, after the first hours of waiting. Taking in both hands a paddle that weighed fifty pounds, the master-puddler, in the roar around him and the blazing heat, went on for twenty minutes stirring the incandescent mass upon the bottom of the furnace. Then, by means of a rabble, he loosened the bottom of it, and kneaded the huge sunlike ball, which he alone, with eyes inured to the flame, could look upon, and the condition of which he knew according to the color. When he withdrew the rabble, it was red-hot and emitted sparks.

Then Bonnaire, with a gesture, gave orders to his fireman to urge the fire, while another workman, an assistant puddler, took up another paddle to do the same thing in his turn—*pour faire un crochet,* to use the term employed in the yards.

"Are you quite well, Monsieur Bonnaire?" asked Luc, who now drew near him.

Bonnaire, somewhat surprised, replied in the affirmative by a nod of his head. Dressed only in his shirt and a simple jacket, he looked very handsome; his neck was white, his face had grown pink partly from his efforts to master the great ball of iron, and partly from the scorching necessitated by the work. He was about thirty-five; he was a fair-skinned colossus. His hair was cut short; his face was broad, calm, and massive; while his large, firm mouth and his great quiet eyes indicated uprightness and kindliness.

"I do not know if you remember me, monsieur," went on Luc. "I saw you here last summer, and had a talk with you."

"Oh, perfectly," replied the master-puddler. "You are a friend of Monsieur Jordan."

But when the young man, somewhat embarrassed, had told him the reason of his visit, whom he had met, what he had seen, and how he had found the wretched

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Josine in the street, and had pointed out the kindness that probably only he (Bonnaire) had the power to do for her, the master-puddler became silent, and seemed in his turn embarrassed. Both men held their peace. There was a pause, broken only by the quick blows of the shingling-hammer, which did duty for two furnaces set back to back. Then, when his voice could again make itself heard, Bonnaire said, simply:

"All right. I will do what I can. . . . As soon as I have finished here—in three-quarters of an hour—I will go with you."

Luc, although it was nearly eleven o'clock, resolved to wait, and he occupied himself by examining a shearing-machine which stood in a dark corner, cutting steel into bars as it came from the puddling-furnace, with as quiet ease as if it were cutting butter. Every time its jaws closed a piece of steel dropped onto a mass beneath it, which a wheelbarrow was to remove to the charging-room in another part of the building. There it was formed into charges of thirty kilogrammes, which were carried to the crucible-room. And in order to occupy himself while he waited, Luc went into this room, which was as dirty, as disorderly, as dark, and as dilapidated as the other. Here, on a level with the uneven floor, encumbered with rubbish, were six batteries of furnaces, each divided into three compartments. These long, narrow, glowing pits, so to speak, the brick masonry of which occupied the entire basement, were heated by a mixture of air and ignited gas, which the master-founder regulated himself by means of a damper. And in the clay floor of this dark room there were six openings into the flaming hell below, into the volcano in perpetual activity, fed by subterranean fires. Covers made of bricks set into an iron frame were laid across the furnaces; but, since these covers did not fit closely, an intense rose-colored light came forth from the intervals, as if there were so many risings of stars. Great rays of light seemed to dart out of the earth, which spouted upward to the dusty windows in the roof. Whenever a workman had need to remove any of the covers it seemed

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as if a whole planet burst forth in spite of obstacles, and the entire room was lighted up as the earth is at sunrise.

At the moment Luc entered the place he could see the whole operation. The workmen were putting crucibles into the furnace. He saw them lower fire-clay pots, which had first been made red-hot, into the furnace; then through a hopper they emptied in the mixture that was in the little boxes, each box holding thirty kilogrammes, just what was needed for each crucible. In three or four hours the fusion would be complete. Then would come the work of taking the crucibles out of the fire and emptying them, the most murderous work of all. And as he walked up to another furnace, where the men who tended it, armed with long iron rods, had just found the fusion to be complete, he recognized Fauchard in the man whose business it was to draw out the crucibles. He was pallid and withered, with a face like leather; but he had preserved his legs and arms, which were those of a Hercules. He was physically deformed by his terrible work, which was always monotonous, and in which he had been employed for fourteen years; but he suffered more from the consciousness that he was losing his intelligence, that he had become a mere machine, doing eternally the same thing — that he was a veritable automaton — a human element struggling for supremacy with fire. It was not merely that he felt what he had physically lost—his bent back, the impaired action of his lower limbs, his eyes burned out of his head, their color grown pale from gazing into the flames—he was conscious that he had deteriorated intellectually, that his intelligence was trembling in the balance, and was now nearly extinct, trodden under the terrible hoof which turned him into a blind beast, crushing him under work that first had poisoned, and then would destroy him. There was but one thing he now craved, he had but one pleasure—that was drink—to drink his four quarts a day or at night—if at work—to drink that the furnace might not burn up his calcined skin like rotten bark, to drink that he might not fall down a heap of ashes, to drink that he

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might at least enjoy one happiness, and end his life in the blessed unconsciousness of perpetual drunkenness.

That very night Fauchard had apprehended that the fire might dry up what was left of his blood. But about eight o'clock he had had a happy surprise. His wife, Natalie, had brought him his four quarts of wine, got on credit from Caffiaux, and he had not expected her. She apologized for not having a little bit of meat to give him, telling him that Dacheux would not give her any more credit. She was always anxious, for she lived in discouragement; she did not see how their wants would be supplied upon the morrow. But he was too pleased to have his wine to be discouraged, and he sent her away with a promise that, like others, he would ask for an advance next day. His crust of bread had been enough food for him; he drank, and was happy. When the moment came for taking the crucibles out of the furnace, he drank a pint; he dipped his great cloth apron into the common basin and wrapped it closely round him. He put great wooden shoes upon his feet, covered his hands with stout leathern gloves, well wetted, took the long tongs in his hands, and then stood over the furnace with his right foot on the cover which had been removed, his whole body in the fearful blaze which rose as soon as the crater of the volcano was opened. He looked for a moment as if blazing like a torch. His wooden shoes were smoking; so were his apron and his gloves; all his flesh seemed as if it must melt in such a heat. But he, without haste, his eyes being accustomed to such flame, was searching for the crucible at the bottom of the fiery pit; leaning over a little way, the better to seize it with his long tongs, and then throwing himself suddenly back by three subtle, measured movements, he ran one of his hands along his tongs, the other joined it, and he pulled out the crucible by an easy turn of his arm, though crucible and iron rod together weighed one hundred and ten pounds; then he placed it on the ground, where it looked like a bit of the sun, a morsel of dazzling white heat, which a moment after became red. Then he began over again and drew out

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the crucibles one after another in the increasing heat of that mass of fire, with more exertion of skill than strength, going and coming among the fiery pits without ever burning himself, or even seeming to feel the intolerable blaze or the fierce brightness. The great forge was there, with its monstrous tools, its press with a power of two thousand tons, but all these were now quiet; even the smaller hammers were quiet, which in the dim light showed their dark, dumpy profiles, looking like barbarous gods. Here Luc found shells—shells that had that day been forged by the smallest of the steam-hammers, after coming out of the moulds in which they had been annealed. What also interested him greatly was an enormous naval cannon, nineteen feet in length, which was still warm, after having passed through the press where pieces of steel weighing 4400 pounds were pressed out like soft pastry; and the great cannon stood there chained, ready to be carried off and lifted by great cranes to the lathe-house, which was some way off beyond the hall of the Martin furnace and the building where steel was cast.

Then Luc, wishing to see it all thoroughly, walked through this hall, the longest of all, where the largest things were fashioned. The Martin furnace enabled large quantities of steel in fusion to be worked at once; while two electric travelling cranes, twenty-six feet in height, carried everywhere, with perfect smoothness, immense masses of iron weighing several tons.

Luc also went into the lathe-house. This was an immense closed shed, kept in better order than the others, and on its sides were arranged two rows of the most admirable tools, as delicate as they were powerful. And there were planing-machines for fashioning plates for armor-clad vessels, which planed the metal as easily as a carpenter would plane a plank. Then there were the lathes, with complicated and delicate machinery, as pretty as jewelry and as amusing as toys. As it was night, only a few of these were at work, each one lighted by an electric lamp, and making but little noise, only a little rattle in the silence. There, too, he found more shells, and a

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mortar that had been cut off at both ends when it came out of the mould.

They were about to make small shells of one hundred and thirty pounds each. The ingot moulds, shaped like bottles, were standing in two rows. Then when the helpers had raked the scoriæ from the crucibles by means of an iron rod, which came out smoking, with little purple dribbles, the master-smelter seized the crucibles in the jaws of his great tongs, emptied two of them into each mould, and the metal, which ran first like a jet of white lava, cooled to pink, with small blue sparks as delicate as flowers. One might have thought that liqueurs were being decanted, liqueurs sparkling like gold, and all was done without noise, with quick and certain motions, with simple beauty in the glare and heat of the fire, which made the whole hall seem a mighty brazier.

Luc, who was not accustomed to the heat, felt stifled and could stay no longer. When he stood within four or five yards of the furnaces his face seemed to be scorched, a boiling sweat burst out upon his body. The shells had interested him, he looked at them as they cooled, and asked himself who were the men that they were destined to kill. Then he went into the next building and found himself in the hall of steam-hammers. There a cannon had been fixed upon a lathe to form the proper calibre for others. It was revolving with prodigious swiftness, and chips of steel were flying about under the sharp blade that itself was motionless; the chips looked like bits of silver. Nothing more would be needed than to bore the interior of this gun, to temper it, and to finish it, and where were the men it would kill when it should be fired? Luc, as he gazed on this heroic result of human labor, saw fire subdued and made serviceable to man—man who was king and conqueror among all the forces of nature—could not help seeing before him a vision of massacre, and all the red folly of a battle-field. He walked away and soon came to another lathe, upon which another cannon was revolving just like the one he had previously seen; but this one was already polished on the outside until it shone

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like new money. It was in charge of a young man hardly more than a child, who was leaning attentively over the machinery, just as a watchmaker does over that of a watch. It revolved incessantly, with a slight noise, while the tool in the interior was boring it with such precision that the deviation was not the tenth part of a millimetre. And when this cannon should have been tempered — that is, should have been dropped from the top of the tower into a bath of petroleum, to what field of disaster would it be taken to kill men? what harvest of human lives would it reap?—forged out of that steel which men and brothers ought only to use to make ploughs and rails.

Luc pushed open a door and went outside into the fresh air for a moment. The night was damp and warm; he drew a long breath, glad of a light wind that was blowing. He looked up, but could not see a star through the thick clouds. But the globes of the lamps here and there in the yards supplied the place of moonshine, and he saw tall chimneys through white clouds of steam, sullying the sky with coal-smoke, that sky which seemed to be everywhere cut up by threads, as it were, of some great spider's web — electric wires for various purposes. And just there was the power-house, with the machines that produced electricity—two machines of great beauty, working in a new building. There was also a brick-yard for making bricks and refractory crucibles of fire-proof clay, a carpenter-shop for making models and packing-boxes, and many shops for selling articles of steel and iron. And Luc, after losing his way in what seemed like a little town, was glad to find, upon some open lots, dark, quiet spots where he could recover himself. He rallied at once, and went back to the infernal regions, where he saw that he was close to the crucible-room.

They were doing something else there now. Seventy crucibles had been taken out of the fire for the casting of one great piece that was to weigh 4960 pounds. In the next hall the mould and its funnel were waiting at the end of the great pit. And speedily a little procession was arranged, and the men of all the gangs joined it, two men

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to each crucible. They picked it up with great tongs, one on each side, and bore it off with long, swinging steps. Another and another and another, until the whole seventy followed each other in line. It looked like some kind of ballet, with Venetian lanterns, with deep orange light, that the dancers were bearing two and two with marvellous rapidity, yet so confidently, and with their movements so well regulated, that they seemed to be sporting in the midst of fire, going and coming as if they were tossing about stars in fusion. In less than three minutes the seventy crucibles were emptied into the mould, from which shot up a golden flame, a beautiful shower of sparks accompanying it.

When Luc returned to the puddling building after walking around for half an hour, he found Bonnaire just about to finish his work.

"Monsieur, I will be with you in one moment."

Already, from the hot bottom of the furnace, the door of which was open and showed brilliant flames, he had three times run off one-quarter of the glowing metal, one hundred and ten pounds of it at a time, and had rolled each into a ball by the help of his rabble, and the three balls, one after the other, had been carried off and placed beneath the hammer. He was now running off metal for the fourth and last time. For twenty minutes he had been standing at the mouth of this burning, fiery furnace, his breast almost cracking in the heat, working with his heavy rabble, his eyes clearly seeing how to do his work, notwithstanding the dazzling glare. He looked steadily into the middle of the brazier at the ball of fire he was rolling round with an incessant movement. He appeared to have grown taller, to have become a maker of stars, a creator of worlds, in the burning light which brought out his pink form against the dark background of the building. At last it was done. He drew out his red-hot rabble, and gave his helper the last one hundred and ten pounds to carry away.

The fireman was there with his little iron car. Armed with his tongs, the assistant puddler seized the ball; it looked like a great sponge on fire thrown out by a volcano;

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he picked it up with a great effort, and flung it into the iron car that the fireman quickly pushed towards the hammer. In a moment a forgeman picked up the ball with his tongs and turned towards the hammer, which all at once began to work. It was deafening; it was dazzling; the ground trembled; it was like the ringing of bells; while the forgeman, with leathern gloves and leathern apron, was lost in a shower of sparks. For a moment the strokes of the hammer were so loud that they seemed to stun the senses like an explosion of gunpowder. Calm in the midst of the roar, the forgeman turned about the sponge, fashioning it on all sides, making the heavy mass into a lump of steel which would soon pass into the hands of those who would roll it into a sheet of metal. And the hammer, obedient to the man, tapped here and tapped there without his saying a word; nor could by-standers perceive the orders he was giving by signs to the man controlling the great hammer, and who was seated on high in his box, with his hand upon the lever.

Luc, who had drawn near while Bonnaire was changing his clothes, saw that this man was little Fortuné, the brother-in-law of Fauchard; he sat perched high above ground, unable to move for hours, except the little mechanical movement of his hand, in the midst of the deafening clamor that he caused. The lever turned to the right meant the hammer was to strike, to the left it was to be lifted. That was all. That was the limit of all that the lad had to think about for long hours in his little cage. For an instant, in the bright light of the sparks, it was possible to see him, so frail, so small, with his pale face, his faded hair, his anxious eyes, those of a poor creature doomed to work like a brute beast, without interest, without any choice on his part, and who had had his moral and physical development arrested.

"If monsieur is ready to leave, I can go now," said Bonnaire, as the shingling-hammer finally became silent.

Luc turned quickly and found himself face to face with the master-puddler, wearing a heavy woollen jacket. Under his arm was a little bundle containing his working-

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clothes and a few other little things that belonged to him, for he was not coming back.

"I am ready. Let us be off."

But Bonnaire still lingered. In case he might have forgotten something, he gave a last glance round the little wooden shed which had served him for a dressing-room. Then he looked at his furnace, the furnace he had considered his for more than ten years. He had earned his living by it; he had there mastered thousands of pounds of steel, which he had handed over to those who were to roll it into sheets of metal. Though he was leaving of his own free will, under the idea that it was his duty, for his comrades' sake and for his own, the withdrawal was not the less heroic. Concealing the emotion that was rising in his throat, he passed out first.

"Take care, monsieur," he said, "this floor is still hot; it might burn your shoes."

Neither of them said anything more. They crossed the two dim courts where electric lights made moonlight. They passed before the low buildings where hammers were working furiously, and as soon as they were out of the Pit black night came down upon them, the groaning of the monster was growing fainter, and the light of his flames decreased. The wind was still blowing, carrying across the heavens a mass of ragged clouds. On the other side of the bridge the bank of the Mionne looked deserted; there was not a soul there.

But Luc found Josine sitting motionless on the bench where he had left her, with her great eyes open, holding close to her slender form the head of Nanet, who was sound asleep. He wanted to go away when he had put her into the hands of Bonnaire, who would assure the poor creature a night's lodging. But Bonnaire suddenly seemed to be embarrassed. He dreaded the scene that he knew must take place when his wife, that terrible La Toupe, should see him come in with "that beggar girl." And even more because he had not told her that he was not going back to the Pit. He felt sure there would be a ter-

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rible quarrel when she knew that he had thrown himself out of work.

"Would you like me to go with you?" asked Luc. "I might explain things."

"Indeed, monsieur," said Bonnaire, very much relieved, "it might be the best thing."

There was not a word exchanged between Bonnaire and Josine. She seemed abashed when she saw the master-puddler; and though he, like a good man as he was, felt a kind of paternal pity for her, especially as he knew what she had suffered at the hands of Ragu, he could not but blame her for her relations with that fellow. When she saw the two men coming she had gently awakened Nanet; then, encouraged by Luc, she and the child followed them, walking behind in silence. All four turned to the right and skirted the tracks of the railroad. They soon found themselves in old Beauclair, whose houses, when they came out of the shadow of the Monts Bleuses, they saw were built on the flat shore of a sort of stagnant pond, until they stretched to the handsome quarter of the city. Old Beauclair was never cleansed except by heavy rains. It was criss-crossed by narrow, tortuous streets, without air, without light, all foul by reason of filthy gutters that ran through them. It was hard to understand why a miserable population was crowded into so narrow a space when the immense plain of Roumagne spread out before them, where the winds of heaven blew as freely as they did upon the ocean. It must have been the bitter struggle between money and landed property which made men measure out so scantily to others any rights in our common mother, the soil. Only a small space would have been necessary to form a healthy home. But speculators had had their say in it, and a century or two of grinding poverty had led to this foul cluster of cheap houses, from which, however, people often were evicted, cheap as it was to live in certain dens not fit even for animals. Regardless of the risk that the land might slip from under them, these little dingy houses seemed to have grown out of the earth; they were piles of damp rubbish,

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nests of vermin and of fever; and how melancholy at this hour of the night seemed this collection of buildings, a place cursed by labor, squalid and filthy, like some frightful growth of the injustice of our social system!

Bonnaire, who was walking ahead, turned into an alley, which led them at last to the Rue des Trois Lunes. It was one of the narrowest streets, without sidewalks, but paved with sharp stones picked out of the Mionne. The house where Bonnaire lived on the first floor was black and crumbling. It had once been so rudely shaken that it had been necessary to prop up the front of it by four great beams, and Ragu, with Josine, had three rooms on the second floor, where the plaster was dropping off, and was only kept in place by the beams. The staircase, as steep as a ladder, began at the front door; there was no vestibule.

"Now, monsieur," said Bonnaire, at last, to Luc, "you are going to do me the kindness to go up with me."

Again he seemed embarrassed. Josine understood that he did not dare to take her into the presence of his wife, for fear of some furious outbreak, and that he did not like to leave her in the street with only the child. She settled the matter, with her sad, sweet air of resignation.

"We need not go in—we two. We will wait here on the staircase. We can sit on a step up above."

To this Bonnaire readily acceded.

"That's right. Be patient for a while, and if I get the key I will show it to you, and you can go up and go to bed."

As he spoke Josine and Nanet had disappeared in the thick darkness of the staircase. Even their breathing could not be heard. They had found a hiding-place somewhere up there.

Then Bonnaire went up, guiding Luc, warning him about the height of the steps and advising him to hold fast by the rope which served the purpose of a hand-railing.

"There, monsieur; here we are. Don't stir, for, indeed, the landings are not wide, and if you were to tumble over you might have a bad fall."

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He opened the door, and made Luc enter first, from politeness, into a good-sized room, lighted by the yellow flame of a kerosene lamp. Late as it was, La Toupe was sitting by the lamp darning some ragged clothes, while her father, old Linot, sat in the shadow, and had dropped off to sleep, with his pipe gone out but still between his teeth. In a bed in one corner were sleeping the two children, Lucien and Antoinette, one six years old and the other four. Outside of this living-room, which was kitchen and dining-room also, there were only two others—one was the bedroom of old father Linot, the other that of the married pair.

Amazed at seeing her husband come home at this unusual hour, La Toupe, whom he had not warned beforehand, raised her head.

"Why, what has brought you home?"

He did not wish at once to begin with the fierce quarrel he foresaw would take place when she heard that he had quitted the Pit; he thought he had better begin by what concerned Josine and Nanet, so he answered evasively:

"Yes—I had finished, so I came home."

Then, without giving her time to ask another question, he introduced Luc.

"See—here is a gentleman, a friend of Monsieur Jordan, who has come to ask me to do something for him. He will tell you what."

More and more surprised, and at once standing on the defensive, La Toupe turned round on the young man, who at once noticed the strong likeness she bore to her brother, Ragu. Small and angry, she had the same sharp face and the same thick red hair; the low forehead, the thin nose, and the same stern jaws. Her complexion was pink, and its freshness still made her good-looking. She seemed young, though she was twenty-eight, and this explained the fancy which had led Bonnaire to marry her, even though he was well aware what her disposition was. And the marriage once consummated, she made her husband wretched by her constant fits of anger. He had to give

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way to her in all things—little details of daily life—for the sake of peace. She was a coquette by nature; her sole ambition was to be finely dressed, and to possess ornaments; therefore, it was only when she received a present of some new article of wearing apparel that she manifested any amiability whatever.

Luc, when he had made up his mind to speak to her, realized the necessity of gaining her favor, in the first instance, by a compliment. On his entrance the room had struck him as pleasant, but he perceived that this must have been due to the care of the housekeeper, for its miserable furniture was of the poorest description.

He approached the bed, and as he did so he exclaimed:

"Oh, what beautiful children; they look like sleeping angels."

La Toupe smiled, but she regarded him steadily and expectantly, being very well aware that this gentleman would not have inconvenienced himself to seek her if he had not wished to obtain something from her of consequence to himself. And when he proceeded to come to the point, and to relate how he had found Josine turned out-of-doors, and fainting with hunger on the stairs, she made a violent gesture and clinched her heavy jaws. Then, without answering the gentleman, she turned to her husband, saying furiously:

"What's the meaning of all this story? Is it any of my business?"

Bonnaire, being appealed to, tried in his kindly and conciliatory manner to appease her.

"If Ragu has sent you the key, you must really let the poor creature have it; for if he is down at Caffiaux's he will probably pass the night there, and you cannot let a woman and a child sleep out-of-doors."

"Yes, I have the key. Yes, Ragu sent it to me, and he did it on purpose that the hussy should not return and establish herself in his house with her good-for-nothing brother. But I do not concern myself with such disgusting tricks. I only know one thing; that it is Ragu who sent me the key, and that it is Ragu to whom I shall return it."

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Then, when her husband tried once more to soften her, she silenced him violently, saying:

"Once and for all, do you intend to force me to associate with my brother's mistress? I can tell you she is one who had better be left to starve at a distance, since she is abandoned enough to let herself be taken up with in this manner. . . . Do you think it is proper that this little brother, whom she drags everywhere, should sleep up there in a little dark den beside her and Ragu? . . . No, no, every one for himself, and it makes very little difference whether she comes to the gutter sooner or later."

Luc listened to this outburst indignantly and with a burning heart. In this woman he again met with that hardness and absence of pity which respectable women of the working-class display to others of their sex, who, in their desperate struggle for existence, fall into error. But La Toupe manifested, in addition to these, a gloomy jealousy and hatred of the pretty, attractive, loving-hearted girl, whom men admired, and to whom they would have given gold chains and silk dresses if she had taken pains to please them. From the day she discovered that her brother had just bought Josine a little silver ring she had hated her.

Luc contented himself with saying, in a voice that trembled with pity, "One must be kind, madame."

La Toupe had no time to answer; there was a noise of heavy, stumbling steps on the staircase, and the door was opened by a trembling hand. It was Ragu, followed by Bourron, who had not parted from him, after the manner of drunkards when they have drunk together. Ragu was still sufficiently sober to tear himself away from Caffiaux's, saying that, after all, he must go back to work the next day. And he had come to his sister's house, with his companion, to take back his key.

"Your key!" cried La Toupe, viciously; "here, take it! . . . And understand that I will not keep it for you again, for I have just been abused to induce me to give it to that good-for-nothing girl of yours. The next time you want to turn any one out-of-doors, attend to it yourself."

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Ragu, mollified, no doubt, by wine, began to laugh.

"Josine is stupid. . . . If she had had any spirit she would have come to drink a glass with us, instead of crying. . . . Women never know how to treat men."

He was not allowed to complete expounding his idea, for Bourron, thin and shrewd, and laughing aimlessly with his air of everlasting amusement, let himself drop into a chair, saying to Bonnaire:

"Come, tell me, is it true that you are going to leave the factory?"

La Toupe turned round with a bounce, as if a bolt of lightning had struck behind her.

"What! he is going to leave the factory?"

There was a moment's silence, and then Bonnaire, courageously, made his decision.

"Yes, I am going to leave the factory. I cannot do otherwise."

"You intend to leave the factory—you mean to leave the factory?" she screamed, furious and thunderstruck, as she came and planted herself before him. "It is not enough, then, that you should take on your shoulders this disgusting strike, which has forced us to use up all our savings in the last two months, but now you must undertake to pay the damages. . . . We are to die of hunger, then, and I am to go without clothes?"

He answered quietly, without allowing himself to become angry.

"It is possible that you may not have a new dress for New Year's Day, and it may be that we shall go hungry, but I say again that I am doing what I ought to do."

She did not yield; she approached him and screamed in his face.

"Ah, indeed, do you imagine that any one will thank you for doing so? Your friends do not hesitate to say already that without you and your strike they would not have suffered with hunger for these two months. And do you know what else they will say when they hear that you have left the factory? They will say that it is a very good thing, and that you are nothing but an imbecile. . . . I

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will never let you do such an idiotic thing. Do you understand? You shall go back to work to-morrow morning."

Bonnaire looked at her fixedly with his clear, straightforward gaze. If he habitually yielded to her on points of domestic policy, if he allowed her to reign despotically in household affairs, he could become adamant when a question of conscience was concerned. Therefore, he contented himself by saying, without raising his voice, but in a masterful tone, which she understood very well:

"You will do me the kindness to be silent. This matter is one that concerns us men, and it is one of which women—you yourself, for instance—know nothing; you will be wise not to occupy yourself with it. . . . You are very agreeable, but if you do not wish that we should quarrel, you had better attend to your mending."

So saying, he pushed her towards the chair under the lamp and obliged her to sit down. Completely overpowered, but trembling with an anger which she knew from experience to be useless, she resumed her needle, and affected to take no interest in questions which, nevertheless, touched her closely. Père Linot, awakened by the sound of voices, relighted his pipe without manifesting any surprise at seeing so many people in the room, and listened to what was going on with the air of an ancient philosopher, to whom these things were of no moment. Even the children themselves, Lucien and Antoinette, were roused from their sleep, and lay in their little bed with their great eyes wide open, apparently trying to understand the important questions discussed by their elders.

Luc had remained standing, and Bonnaire now addressed himself to him, as though to make him a witness to what he said.

"You will agree with me, monsieur, that every one must respect his own honor. . . . The strike was inevitable, and if it was to be done over again I should act as I did before; I mean, that I should do everything in my power to excite my comrades to seek justice. Something more

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than bare food is necessary to existence, and work ought to command a fair price, unless we are to resign ourselves to being absolute slaves. We have so much right on our side that Monsieur Delaveau has been obliged to yield on all points, for he has been forced to accept our new scale of wages. . . . But now it is plain to me that the man himself is furious, and that, as my wife says, some one must pay the piper. If I do not leave to-day of my own free will, he will find a pretext for turning me out-of-doors to-morrow. Then, why should I remain, simply to act as a continual occasion for quarrels? No, no, if I did so, the result would be annoyances of all kinds to be borne by my comrades, and that would be wrong on my part. . . . I made believe to go back, because my comrades talked of continuing the strike if I did not. But now that they have all returned to work, and everything is quiet, I prefer to withdraw, since I realize that it is best for me to do so. The matter will be easily settled; no one now will leave on my account, and I shall be doing what I ought to do. . . . Every one has his own honor to consider, monsieur, and this is mine."

He said these things with a grand simplicity, and with a manner so quiet and so determined that Luc was profoundly moved. This common workman whom he had seen covered with soot, working diligently and silently at his furnace—this man who a moment before had shown himself so mild and gentle, so full of kindly tolerance in his own household—now rose suddenly to be a hero in the cause of labor, and revealed himself as one of those unknown strugglers who give their whole existence to the cause of justice, and who do, indeed, belong to a universal brotherhood, since they lay down their lives, in silence, for others.

La Toupe repeated, violently, without stopping her needle:

"And we shall suffer with hunger!"

"And we shall suffer with hunger, it is very likely," said Bonnaire. "But I shall sleep with a good conscience."

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Ragu began to sneer.

"Oh, to suffer with hunger," he said. "That is of no use; you never get anything by it. I don't defend the owners; they are a hard-hearted lot. Only, since they are necessary to us, it is best to come to an understanding with them in the end, and to do what they wish to some extent."

He continued in this joking strain, and as he did so he showed the workings of his own mind. He was an average workman, neither good nor bad, the spoiled product of the wage system, such as it has become under the actual organization of labor. He complained loudly of the capitalists; he rebelled against forced labor; he was even capable of revolt for a brief period. But the influences of heredity were too much for him; he had, at bottom, a slavish heart, and was in bondage to a profound respect for established tradition; he was consumed with a secret envy of the owner, the supreme master, the possessor of all things enjoyable, and he really possessed no ambition except the secret one of some day occupying the other's place, in order that he might, in his turn, enter into the joys of possession. His ideal, in short, was to do nothing, and he wished to be an owner in order to do nothing.

"Ah, that rascal Delaveau; I should like to change places with him for a week. It would amuse me to see him going to make up the furnaces, while I smoked big cigars all the time. And we shall all be owners, you understand, in the new order of things that is coming."

This idea caused Bourron the greatest entertainment, for he was always in a condition of speechless amusement at Ragu when they had been drinking together.

"That is very true," he cried. "Ah, to think of the good times there will be when we are masters!"

Bonnaire shrugged his shoulders, full of contempt for this low conception of the future victory of labor over capital. He himself had read, he had reflected, he believed he understood. He began to speak again, excited by what had just been said, and wishing to show himself

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in the right. Luc recognized the socialistic idea, as it is interpreted by its partisans. It demands, in the first place, that the nation shall take possession of the soil, and of the implements of labor, in order to make both of these common property, and to distribute them anew. Labor will then be reorganized; it will be rendered universal and obligatory in such a manner that the remuneration for it shall be proportionate to the hours of work performed by each person. The point where Bonnaire got into trouble was the practicability of reaching this social condition under such regulations; and, in particular, he failed to demonstrate the actual working of the system, which would require for its execution a complicated machinery of direction and control, necessitating a severe and onerous state police. But when Luc, who did not go to this extreme in his humanitarian principles, made some objections, Bonnaire answered him with the tranquil assurance of the firm believer.

"Everything must belong to us, and we will reconstruct everything, in such wise that each person shall have his just share of labor and of repose, of trouble and of enjoyment. There is no other reasonable solution; injustice and suffering have now become too great."

Ragu and Bourron agreed to all this. Was not the wages system wholly corrupt and rotten? Was it not this system which, by exciting anger and hatred, induced the contention between classes, the long warfare of extermination that was now being waged between capital and labor? It was by reason of this system that man had become the enemy of man in this conflict of egoisms, in this monstrous tyranny of a social state based on iniquity. Poverty and misery had no other cause; the wages system was the plague spot that engendered hunger, with all its woful consequences of theft, murder, and prostitution; it was responsible for the degradation of men and women, who, in a state of rebellion, and outcasts from every kindly feeling, were turned into perverted and destructive forces exerted against a cruel and unjust state of society. There was no cure possible for all this but the abolition

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of the wages system, which was to be replaced by a new social condition, a wholly different era, that would be the ideal state of society, whose secret was in the possession of to-morrow. At this point there were differences of opinion in regard to method, each reformer believing that he possessed a sure means for insuring the happiness of future ages; and the shock of socialistic parties, each of which desired to impose its own reorganization, its own equitable division of wealth, had resulted in nothing but a rough political mêlée. But the wages system in its existing form was condemned by one and all, and nothing could save it; it had had its day, and it would disappear, as all forms of slavery had disappeared whenever the continual march of progress had completed a period in the history of humanity. It was nothing now but a dead organism which threatened to poison the entire body, but which the vitality of the people was going to eliminate, even though it were at the cost of a final tragedy.

"For all that," continued Bonnaire, "these Qurignons, who founded the Pit, were not bad people. The last one of them, Michel, whose end was so sad, did a great deal to improve the lot of the working-man. It was he who established a relief association, to which he contributed the first hundred thousand francs, and he promised, in the future, to double each year whatever the members themselves contributed. He founded a library and a lecture-hall, as well as an infirmary, where there are free consultation hours twice a week, and besides these a work-room and school for children. And Monsieur Delaveau, although he is not naturally kind-hearted, has made it a duty to respect these. They have been in operation now for years. But what will you have? It is too late to do anything. It is, as one might say, like cauterizing a wooden leg. All this is charity, not justice. These things might go on for years and years without hunger ever ceasing, without poverty ever being abolished. No, no! there is no means of relief possible; we must strike at the root of the evil!"

At this moment Père Linot, who had seemed to be

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asleep again, suddenly remarked from the depths of the gloom:

"The Qurignons! I knew them once."

Luc turned and perceived the old man seated in his chair and drawing empty puffs at his extinguished pipe. He was fifty years old, and for nearly thirty years he had been at the Pit withdrawing crucibles from the furnace. Small and fat, with a pale, bloated face, one would have said that the fire had inflated him instead of drying him up. Perhaps it was the water coming from the steam, with which he was always soaked, that gave him rheumatism. He walked with difficulty, for it had early taken possession of his legs. And as he did not fulfil the conditions necessary to obtain the pitiful pension of three hundred francs a year, which the more recent workmen were to receive later, he would have perished of hunger in the street if his daughter, La Toupe, had not been willing to take him in; she did so, however, only at Bonnaire's instigation, and made the old man pay for it by continual reproaches and privations of all kinds.

"Ah, yes," he repeated, slowly, "I knew them all—the Qurignons! There was Monsieur Michel, who is now dead; he was five years older than I. I entered the works under Monsieur Jérôme when I was eighteen and he was forty-five, but the difference between us does not prevent him from living still. . . . But before Monsieur Jérôme there was Monsieur Blaise, the founder of the whole thing; he came and settled himself at the Pit with his two sets of machinery nearly twenty-four years ago. I never knew him. My father, Jean Ragu, and my grandfather, Pierre Ragu, worked under him; and I might say that Pierre Ragu was his comrade, since they were both steel-workers, without a cent in their pockets, when they started the business together in this valley in the Monts Bleuses, which was then deserted, and where they found water-power on the bank of the Mionne. . . . The Qurignons have made a great fortune; and look at me, Jacques Ragu, always without a sou, and with my bad legs; there is my son, too, Auguste Ragu, who will never be richer

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than I am now after thirty years' labor, not to speak of my wife and children; they have all suffered from hunger, as all the Ragus have suffered for a hundred years!"

He said these things without displaying any anger, with the resigned air of a beast which is past work. He looked at his pipe for a moment, surprised not to find it draw. Then, seeing that Luc was listening to him with a pitying interest, he concluded, shrugging his shoulders slightly:

"Bah, monsieur, it is the natural fate for us poor wretches. There will always be owners and workmen. . . . My grandfather and my father were just like me, and my son will be what I am. What good does it do to rebel? Every one's lot is cast when he is born. . . . After all, if one might wish for anything, it would be to have something when one is old to buy enough tobacco."

"Tobacco!" cried La Toupe; "you smoke two sous' worth a day. Do you suppose that I am going to provide you with tobacco now that we shall no longer have bread to eat?"

She had put him upon an allowance, and this was Père Linot's only real cause of distress at present. He tried in vain to relight his pipe, in which there was absolutely nothing but ashes. And Luc, his heart filled with increasing pity, continued to contemplate him, sunk together in a heap upon his chair. This lamentable wreck was the outcome of the wages system; a laborer, used up and thrown aside at fifty. A crucible-man, all his life a crucible-man, whose function had become mechanical, he was now warped, stultified, reduced to imbecility and paralysis. Nothing survived in this unfortunate being but the sentiment of fatalism belonging to his slavery.

Bonnaire now put in a proud protest.

"No, no; it will not be always as it is now; there will not always be owners and laborers; a day will come when there will be nothing but free and joyous men. . . . Our sons, perhaps, will see that day, and it is surely worth while that we, their fathers, should have the suffering, if we are able by it to gain their happiness in the future."

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"Nonsense!" cried Ragu, in a tone of jollity. "You must make more haste than that. I want to be in it myself. What I want is to sit at my ease and to have chicken for every meal."

"So do I, so do I," assented Bourron, in an ecstasy. "I shall take back my place."

Père Linot, with a gesture of contempt, enforced silence, while he continued:

"Take it easy; it is when one is young that one hopes. One's head is full of foolishness, and one thinks that one is going to change the order of the universe. And then the universe goes on as usual, and one is swept away just like other people. . . . For me, I do not want anything from anybody. Sometimes, when I can drag myself outdoors, it happens that I meet Monsieur Jérôme in his wheeled chair, pushed by a servant. I take off my hat to him, because it is due to a man for whom you work and who is so rich. I do not believe he recognizes me, for he simply looks at me with those eyes, which seem to be full of clear water. . . . The Qurignons have drawn a good lot; that is a fine thing, and one respects them for it; there will no longer be any good God, if one gets rid of those who have money."

Ragu now related how, that same evening, on coming out of the factory, Bourron and he had seen Monsieur Jérôme pass in his wheeled chair. They had saluted him, as a natural thing. How could they do otherwise without being impolite? But all the same, a Ragu on foot, in the dirt, with an empty stomach, bowing to a Qurignon, who was riding, with his stomach wrapped up in coverings, and with a domestic taking care of him like a fat baby—all this was maddening, and it made one want to throw one's tools into the water, and force the rich to share their wealth, so that one could enjoy the luxury of idleness in one's own turn.

"Idleness? No, no! That would be death itself," answered Bonnaire. "Everybody must work, and in the end that will be happiness gained and unjust poverty overcome. . . . One must not envy those Qurignons.

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They are an example to us by saying to us, 'You see plainly that a laborer can achieve a great fortune with intelligence, labor, and economy'; but they do irritate me a little, because I know that all this money has been gained by exploiting their comrades, and curtailing for the latter both food and liberty; but that will be paid for some day, all that wickedness. The happiness of all can never be made to agree with the exaggerated prosperity of one. . . . But we must wait patiently until we can see what the future has in store for each of us. My own idea is, as I have told you: it is that those two little rascals who are now in bed, and who are listening to us, will be happier one day than I shall ever have been; and that their children will in turn be happier than they themselves can ever be. . . . And in order that this shall be, we need wish for nothing but justice, we need only to understand one another as brothers, and we shall conquer, even though it be at the cost of a great deal of misery yet in store for us."

Lucien and Antoinette had, in truth, not gone to sleep again; the atmosphere of interest created by every one talking so late had kept them awake, with their rosy heads motionless upon the pillow, and their great eyes wide open and thoughtful, as if they understood what was going on.

"Happier some day than we are," said La Toupe, dryly. "Yes, for they will suffer to-morrow from hunger, since we shall have no food to give them."

Her words cut like the stroke of an axe. Bonnaire shuddered, called back from his dreams by the sudden chill of that poverty which he had deliberately chosen in leaving the workshops. Luc felt the shiver of that poverty pass beside him, as he stood in the large, barely furnished room, where the little kerosene lamp smoked dismally. Was not this present struggle an impossible thing; were not this grandfather, father, mother, and two children doomed to death in the near future if the wages system persisted in its powerless protestation against capital? A gloomy silence prevailed, a great black shadow enveloped the room and darkened all their faces.

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But there was a knock at the door, followed by a burst of laughter, and Babette, Bourron's wife, entered, with her plump face that was always gay. Fresh and round, with a white skin and thick flaxen hair, she looked like an eternal spring. Not having found her husband at Caffiaux's, she had come to look for him, knowing that he would find it hard to get back if she did not escort him herself. She had, however, no appearance of displeasure; on the contrary, she seemed amused, as if she found it agreeable that her husband should take a little pleasure.

"Ah, there you are, Père la Joie!" she cried, gayly, as soon as she perceived him. "I was pretty sure that you had not left Ragu, and that I should find you here. Do you know that it is late? I have put Marthe and Sebastian to bed, and now I suppose I must put you to bed also."

Bourron never could get angry with her, she showed so much tact in getting him away from his comrades.

"Ah, but she is strong, that woman! You understand that it is my wife who puts me to bed. . . . Come on, I am willing, since I am always obliged to end in this way."

He rose, and Babette, then perceiving from the gloomy faces of all those in the room that she had entered into an atmosphere of great sadness, perhaps into a quarrel, tried to smooth things. In her own house she sang from morning until night, loving her husband, comforting him, and drawing for him glowing pictures of the future whenever he was discouraged. The miserable poverty and suffering in which she had lived since childhood had not been able to embitter her continual good-humor. She was always perfectly convinced that things would turn out well, and she herself was always on the high-road to paradise.

"What is the matter with you all, then? Are the children ill?"

Then when La Toupe burst out afresh and related to her how Bonnaire had left the works, that they should all be dead of hunger before the week was out, and that, so far as she was concerned, the whole of Beauclair might be wiped out, for they were too unhappy—they could no

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longer live—Babette protested, and prophesied prosperous and sunny days with her air of confident gayety.

"Oh no! oh no! do not make people unhappy, *ma chère!* You wil 3ee that everything will settle itself quietly. They will go to work, and they will be happy."

And she carried off her husband, amusing him by telling him things so droll and so tender that he followed her with docility; she even joked with him on his recent drunkenness, which had now become inoffensive.

Luc had decided to follow them, when La Toupe, in the course of arranging her work on the table, found the key which she had thrown at her brother, and which he had not yet put away.

"Well, do you intend to take it, after all? Are you going up to bed? They say that baggage who belongs to you is waiting for you somewhere. You can go and look her up, if that amuses you."

Ragu, sneering, balanced the key for a moment on one of his thumbs. All the evening he had been crying in Bourron's face that he did not intend to feed a good-for-nothing, who was stupid enough to lose a finger in the machinery without getting compensation for it. He had had this girl as he had had plenty of others, all of whom were more than willing that he should have them. The affair was simply at the pleasure of both parties, and when one was tired of it, then, good-morning, good-evening—each one would go back whence he or she came. But since he had been there he had sobered down, and he did not hold to his evil obstinacy. Then his sister, exasperated by him, persisted in dictating to him what he should do.

"You may be very sure that I shall take her back if it pleases me to take her back....After all, she is worth more than the others. They might kill her before she would say an evil word."

And turning to Bonnaire, who was silent, he said:

"She is stupid, Josine is, to be so much afraid.... Where has she hidden herself?"

"She is waiting on the stairs with Nanet," said the master-puddler.

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Then Ragu opened the door wide, in order to call violently:

"Josine! Josine!"

No one answered; no sound came from the thick gloom of the staircase. And in the faint light which the kerosene lamp threw on the passage-way only Nanet was to be seen, standing upright, apparently watchful and expectant.

"Ah, there you are, good-for-nothing brat!" cried Ragu. "What are you up to?"

The child seemed in no way disconcerted; he did not even make a backward movement. Drawing up his little figure, which was about as tall as a boot, he answered, bravely:

"I was listening, in order to find out."

"And your sister, where is she? Why does she not answer when she is called?"

"She was above with me, sitting on one of the steps. But when she heard you come in here she was afraid that you would come up and beat her, and she preferred to go down, so that she could slip off easily if you were in a bad temper."

This made Ragu laugh. The child's fearlessness amused him.

"You are not afraid, then?"

"I? If you touch me I am going to cry out so loud that my sister will be warned and will slip away."

Completely pacified, the man went and leaned over the rope, in order to call out again:

"Josine! Josine! Come up; do not be so foolish. You know very well that I am not going to kill you."

The same deathlike silence continued; nothing stirred; nothing rose out of the gloom. Luc, whose presence was no longer necessary, took leave, saluting La Toupe, who, with her lips compressed, bent her head dryly. The children had at last gone to sleep. Père Linot, his extinguished pipe in his mouth, went to seek the little room where he slept, supporting himself by the wall as he did so. And Bonnaire, who in his turn had fallen in a chair,

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sat silent in the midst of the desolate room, his eyes fixed on vacancy, thinking of the threatening future, and waiting to go to bed by the side of his terrible wife.

"Courage, we shall meet again," Luc said to him, pressing his hand warmly.

In the passage Ragu continued to call, with a voice which he now made supplicating:

"Josine! Come up, Josine! when I tell you that I am not angry any longer."

Then, as the gloom remained unbroken, he turned to Nanet, who did not interfere, leaving his sister free to act in her own way.

"Perhaps she has run away."

"Oh no. Where do you suppose she could go? . . . She must be sitting down again upon a step."

Luc descended, guiding himself by the rope, feeling with his feet for the steep, high steps, with considerable fear of falling down them head foremost, so dense was the obscurity. He seemed to himself to be plunging into the blackness of an abyss, down a narrow ladder, between two damp walls. As he descended, he thought he heard deep, stifled sobs coming from the depths of the dolorous gloom below.

Above, the voice of Ragu repeated resolutely:

"Josine! Josine! . . . If you do not come up, you must wish me to come and fetch you."

Then Luc stopped, feeling the approach of a faint sound. It was a very gentle movement that approached, a light, animated, hardly perceptible quiver of a trembling approach. He effaced himself against the wall, for he understood very well that a living creature was passing by, although it was invisible, and recognizable only by the careful movement of its body.

"It is I, Josine," he said, in a low voice, in order that she should not be alarmed.

The little rustle continued to ascend, and there was no answer. But, with a hardly perceptible motion, the creature of distress and mystery passed by. And as she did so, a little feverish hand seized his, a burning mouth

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pressed to his hand kissed it ardently in an outburst of gratitude, in the devotion of a whole nature. She thanked him, and in so doing, unperceived and veiled from sight, she abandoned herself to a delicious childlikeness. Not a word was exchanged; there was only that silent kiss in the darkness, moistened with warm tears.

The little flutter was already gone; the gentle spirit continued to ascend. Luc remained much overcome, touched to the depths of his being by this shadowy meeting; for the kiss of those lips that he had not seen had gone to his heart.

A tender and irresistible emotion had taken possession of him; he tried to convince himself that he was interested only in finding a lodging where Josine could sleep that night. But, he continued to ask himself, why should she weep, seated on that lowest step at the entrance to the street? Why had she delayed so long to answer the appeals of the man above, who offered her a shelter? Was it because she experienced a mortal regret, because she sighed for some impossible dream; and was she yielding, in her final ascent, to necessity alone in resuming the life that she was condemned to lead?

The voice of Ragu made itself heard above for the last time.

"Ah, there you are; that is not so bad. Come, let us go to bed. We shall have nothing to eat this evening."

Luc hastened away, in great distress of mind; seeking a cause for the terrible bitterness of soul into which he fell. While he retraced his way with difficulty in the obscure labyrinth of unclean streets in old Beauclair, he thought over the matter, and mourned at it. Poor girl! she was the victim of her environment; she would never have yielded to Ragu had it not been for the crushing weight and the desperation of poverty; what exhaustive labor it would be to restore humanity so that labor should once more be an honor and a pleasure, so that love should again flourish, healthy and strong, in the great harvest of truth and justice! In the mean time it was evident that the best thing for the poor girl was that she should

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remain with Ragu, if he could be prevailed on not to treat her too cruelly. The tempestuous wind had ceased, the stars appeared in the heavens among heavy and motionless clouds. But what a black night, what an immense melancholy overwhelmed his own heart.

All at once Luc emerged on the steep bank of the Mionne, near the wooden bridge. Opposite to him the Pit, always at work, was resounding with the light dance of the flatting-hammers, alternating with the more pronounced blows of the shingling-hammers. The fires illumined the shade intermittently; great lurid clouds of smoke made a storm horizon of the workshops as they passed across its electric lights. This nocturnal life of the monster, whose furnaces were never extinguished, recalled to his mind the destroyer, labor, imposing itself on its victims as though it were the galleys, and everywhere rewarded with suspicion and contempt. The fine face of Bonnaire passed through his thoughts, and he saw him as he had left him in that gloomy room, struck down like one vanquished before the unknown future. Then, without any transition, another remembrance of the evening crossed his mind; he saw the disfigured profile of Lange, the potter, hurling his malediction with the vehemence of a prophet announcing the destruction of Beauclair, under the weight of its crimes. Now, at this hour, Beauclair, terrorized, was asleep, and lay before him at the entrance to the plain, nothing but a confused mass, sunk in gloom, and not displaying even a single light. There was nothing visible but the Pit, always the Pit, with its infernal, unchanging life, from which rolled forth continual thunders, and whose unceasing flames devoured the lives of men.

Midnight sounded in the darkness from a neighboring clock. Luc then passed over the bridge and descended the road to Brias in order to return to La Crêcherie, where his bed awaited him. As he arrived there a great light suddenly illuminated the entire country, the peaks of the Monts Bleuses, the roofs of the sleeping town, and even the extended plains of Roumagne. It was caused by a tap-

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ping of the blast-furnace, whose black profile appeared, half-way up the hill, like an incendiary. And Luc, raising his eyes, had again the perception of a rosy dawn, and saw, as he imagined, the rising of the star promised to his dream of a new humanity.

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III

THE next day was Sunday, and no sooner had Luc risen than he received a friendly note from Madame Boisgelin inviting him to breakfast at Guerdache. She had known him at Beaulieu, and, being aware that the Jordans would not return until Monday, she told him how pleased she would be to see him, and to have a little conversation with him in regard to their intimacy at Paris, where they had both been concerned in charitable affairs of some importance, and of a confidential nature, in the poorest quarter of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. Luc entertained for her a kind of affectionate veneration, and he accepted the invitation at once, saying in his reply that he would be at Guerdache at eleven o'clock.

The week of pouring rain by which Beauclair had been inundated was now succeeded by superb weather. A radiant sun shone in a heaven of blue as dazzling as though it had just been washed by the recent showers—a brilliant sun, imparting so much warmth that the roads were already dry. It was therefore an enjoyment to Luc to walk the mile and a half between Guerdache and the town. He crossed the new part of the city, which extends from the Place de la Mairie to the edge of Roumagne, about a quarter past ten; and as he did so he was struck with the light-hearted gayety of this showy quarter of the town, which contrasted forcibly with the oppressive gloom of that other part of the city seen by him the evening before. Both the *sous-préfecture* and the court-house were situated in the new quarter of the town, the latter being a beautiful building, the plaster ornaments of which were not yet dry. The Church of Saint-Vincent, a graceful structure of the sixteenth century, stood exactly between

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the old town and the new; it had just been repaired, the bell-tower having threatened to overwhelm the worshippers. The closed shops of the tradesmen were gilded by the sun, as well as the Place de la Mairie itself, which was at the end of the Rue de Brias, and contained a vast and ancient building that served at once for a town-hall and for a school.

Luc proceeded by the Rue de Formerie, a thoroughfare leading directly from the public square to the Rue de Brias, and soon reached the open country. Guerdache was situated on the road to Formerie, and almost at the gates of Beauclair. He was not pressed for time, and he loitered like a man absorbed in dreams. On the other side of the town the houses were built on a gentle slope, and as he glanced backward towards the north he saw the immense range of the Monts Bleuses, shutting in the narrow gorge from which descends the torrent of the Mionne. There, in a sort of estuary opening on the plain, the crowded buildings and lofty chimneys of the Pit could be plainly seen, as well as the blast-furnaces of La Crêcherie, an industrial town which is visible along the entire boundary of Roumagne from a distance of leagues. Luc gazed at it a long time. Then, as he resumed his slow progress towards Guerdache, whose magnificent trees he could now discern in the distance, he recalled and analyzed the characteristic history of the Qurignons, as told him by Jordan.

Blaise Qurignon, the founder of the Pit, was a workman who came there and established himself on the bank of the Mionne, in 1823, with two tilt-hammers actuated by water-power. He never employed more than twenty workmen, amassed only a moderate fortune, and was content with a small house, a brick cottage, which he built near the factory, and which was now occupied by Delaveau, the present director. Jérôme Qurignon, the second of the name, was born the same year that his father founded the business, and it was he who became an industrial king. All the productive strength, all the incipient power of the people, which continuous superiority in trade had developed, were concentrated in him. The latent energy

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suppressed during hundreds of years in a long line of progenitors obstinately fighting their way towards happiness, struggling furiously in the dark, and dying hard, had finally culminated by giving birth to this man who was to succeed triumphantly. He was himself able to do eighteen hours of work a day, and was endowed with intelligence, judgment, and force of will to an extent which enabled him to overcome all obstacles. In less than twenty years he had created a town that seemed to come forth from the earth full grown at his bidding, in which he employed about twelve hundred workmen, acquiring millions; then, finding the humble house built by his father too small for him, he bought Guerdache, a magnificent estate, with a house large enough to accommodate ten families, and large landed property surrounding it, a fine park, and a farm, for eight hundred thousand francs. His intention was that Guerdache should be the patriarchal homestead where his descendants, children of those numerous loving and happy couples who should spring from his riches as from a blessed land, would reign luxuriously. His own indomitable efforts would make certain that the future ascendency which occupied his dreams was enjoyed by a younger generation; for was not that accumulated force which he felt now issuing from himself infinite as well as definite? Would it not reproduce itself in even greater measure in his children, continuing without exhaustion or diminution for long years to come? But he himself, while still young, still strong as an oak, in full enjoyment of his powers, and only fifty-two years old, was stricken by the first misfortune of his life. A sudden attack of paralysis deprived him of the use of his lower limbs, and he was constrained to give up the management of the Pit to his eldest son, Michel.

Michel Qurignon, the third of the name, was just thirty years old. He had a younger brother, Philippe, who lived in Paris, having married against his father's will a woman of extraordinary beauty but of doubtful character; besides the two sons, there was a daughter, Laure, about twenty-five years old, who caused her parents much dis-

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tress by the extreme religious devotion that she displayed. Michel himself had married, when very young, a woman of a sweet disposition but delicate health; at the time that he was suddenly called upon to assume the management of the Pit they had had two children, Gustave and Suzanne, the one five and the other three years old. It was understood that Michel would carry on the works in the name and for the benefit of the whole family, each member receiving his share of the profits according to the division fixed upon by common agreement. Although he did not possess to the same heroic extent the admirable qualities of his father, either as regards capacity for work, intelligence, or method, he had an excellent head; during ten years he not only succeeded in preventing the business from declining, but even enlarged it, in one respect, by replacing the old machinery. But he was beset by annoyances and sorrows, which seemed to foreshadow approaching disaster. His mother was dead, his father, being paralyzed, never came out of the house except for exercise in a wheeled chair, and was, moreover, practically dumb, for he could only pronounce, with the utmost difficulty, a few words. Then his sister, Laure, carried away by mystical exaltation, entered a convent, the earthly joys of Guerdache having no power to restrain her. While melancholy accounts reached him from Paris of his brother Philippe's establishment, for his wife, having figured in some scandalous affairs, had dragged her husband into a life wasted on pleasure, folly, and madness. Lastly, Michel lost his own frail and gentle wife, and this overpowering loss threw him into an unbalanced condition, which resulted in completely disordering his life. He had before yielded to fancies for pretty girls, but he had done so discreetly, because he was afraid of paining his beloved and invalid wife. When she was gone, there was no longer anything to restrain him, and he took his pleasure freely wherever he happened to find it. He became involved in chance love-affairs upon which he expended the greater part of his time and strength. Thus another decade rolled by, during which the Pit declined, having no

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longer such a leader as it had in its days of conquest. The master who now directed it was lazy and self-indulgent, eating up all the profits. A feverish love of luxury took possession of him; he cared for nothing but fêtes, pleasures, and expenditure for the mere enjoyments of living. To make matters worse, other causes of ruin, such as bad management, and enfeebled effort, which became every day more relaxed, were combined with industrial catastrophes, by reason of which all industries in metal throughout that part of the country were in danger of extinction. It became impossible to continue the manufacture of steel, rails, and iron framing at low prices, owing to the successful competition of the steel-factories in the north and east, which, owing to the discovery of a certain chemical process, would be able henceforward to economize by the employment of ores of poor quality. In the space of two years Michel found the Pit giving way under him. A day came when he needed three hundred thousand francs for the payment of notes, and he would be obliged to borrow the money. At the same time occurred a revolting tragedy in his own life, which ended by driving him mad. He was nearly fifty-four; his heart was absorbed in a pretty girl who had taken possession of his senses; he had brought her from Paris, secreted her at Beauclair, and he indulged at times in an intoxicating dream of escaping with her and going to the Lands of the Sun to live for love, far from all annoyances. His son, Gustave, now twenty-seven, whose life had been passed in idleness except for a few superficial studies, knew about all his father's love-affairs, joked with him in regard to them, and lived with him on the footing of a boon companion. He treated the Pit as a joke, refused to set foot in that dirty and disgusting place, among a mass of old iron, rode on horseback, hunted, and altogether lived the life of an amiable, high-bred, lazy dog, as if he had boasted centuries of illustrious ancestors. At last, one fine day, after taking out of his father's desk the only hundred thousand francs that the latter had succeeded in collecting to meet the next day's payments, he disappeared with the

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pretty girl, the *maîtresse à papa*, who had thrown herself into his arms. The next day, Michel, stricken both in heart and purse by the double ruin of his passion and his fortune, was seized by a tremendous vertigo, and killed himself with a shot from his revolver.

It was three years since all this happened. And the premature ruin of the Qurignon family was still going on as if for an example of the severest fate. Shortly after the departure of Gustave, news was received of his death at Nice, in a carriage accident, where the runaway horses had thrown him over a precipice. The younger brother of Michel, Philippe, had also disappeared, having been killed in a duel in Paris, after a very discreditable career into which he had been drawn by his abandoned wife, who was said to be now in Russia with an opera-singer. Their only child, André Qurignon, the last of the name, was the victim of a rachitic affection, complicated by mania, and was forced to be put under restraint in an asylum. Besides this invalid and his aunt Laure, who, being always in the convent, was the same as dead, there remained only Suzanne, Michel's daughter. Suzanne, when she was twenty, five years before the death of her father, had married Boisgelin, who had been attracted by her on meeting her at the house of a neighbor. Although the Pit was already in jeopardy, Michel, with ostentatious pride, had found means to give his daughter a *dot* of a million francs. Boisgelin, on his side, was very rich, having inherited from his grandfather and father more than six million francs, acquired in a business of doubtful character, by people who had a bad name for usury and robbery, in which, however, he personally was wholly unconcerned. He was very much deferred to, envied, and sought after, having a superb *hôtel* in Paris, in the Parc Monceau, and leading a life of expensive folly. He achieved the distinction of being at the foot of his class at the Lycée Condorcet, which he had astonished by his elegance, and he never afterwards lifted a finger to work, believing himself to be one of the new species of aristocrats, who prove their

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nobility by squandering with magnificence the fortunes acquired by their progenitors, without lowering themselves to earn a sou. Unfortunately, the six millions proved insufficient for the immense expenses of his establishment, and he allowed himself to be drawn into financial speculations which he did not in the least understand. The Bourse was at that time much excited upon the subject of new gold-mines, and Boisgelin was persuaded that if he risked his fortune he would double it in two years. Then, all at once, occurred collapse and ruin; for a moment he believed that he was absolutely bankrupt, even to the point of not saving from the ruins a morsel of bread for the next day. He wept like a child, and looked down at his useless hands, asking himself what he could do under these circumstances, since they neither knew how to work nor were fit to do so. It was then that his wife, Suzanne, showed herself truly admirable and displayed a tenderness, a judgment, and a courage which put him on his feet again. Her own *dot* of a million of francs was found to be untouched. She decided that in order to meet the situation their house in the Parc Monceau, where their living expenses were too great, must be sold; and another million was thus realized. But how to live, above all in Paris, upon two millions where six had not sufficed, and where all the temptations occasioned by the display of luxury in a large city would be renewed? Their future was decided in the end by a chance meeting.

Boisgelin had a poor cousin, Delaveau, the son of his father's sister, whose husband, an unfortunate inventor, had died in poverty. Delaveau was an engineer, a graduate of the Ecole des Arts et Métiers, and at the time of Michel Qurignon's suicide he occupied a modest position in a coal-mine at Brias. He understood clearly the situation at the Pit, and believed himself fully qualified to relieve it by means of a new scheme of organization; therefore, being very ambitious of success, and further stimulated by his wife, he came to Paris in search of a sleeping partner with capital, and there one evening he met his cousin Boisgelin face to face on the street. Like a flash the idea

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came to him—why had he not already thought of the latter, who was a capitalist, and, moreover, the husband of a Qurignon? As soon as he understood the condition of his cousin's affairs, and learned of the two remaining millions which he and his wife were anxious to invest advantageously, he enlarged his scheme still further; he had several interviews with his cousin, in the course of which he displayed such strong convictions, and showed himself so full of intelligence and energy, that he ended by convincing the other man. His scheme certainly displayed genius; he proposed to utilize the recent catastrophe to buy the Pit for one million when it was worth two, and then to organize the manufacture of fine steel work, which would speedily result in considerable profit. Then, why should not the Boisgelins themselves buy Guerdache? In the forced liquidation which was about to be made of the Qurignon fortune, they could easily obtain it for five hundred thousand francs, although it had cost eight hundred thousand. Boisgelin would still have five hundred thousand francs out of his two millions, and these he might put into the management of the works; while he, Delaveau, pledged himself formally to increase the capital tenfold by paying a princely interest upon it. Boisgelin would move his establishment from Paris, and live mainly at Guerdache, where he could lead a pleasant existence until such time as the colossal fortune, which he and his wife would certainly some day regain, should enable them to resume their Parisian life with all the luxury of their dreams.

It was Suzanne who finally determined her husband in favor of this plan, for he himself was very uneasy at the idea of a provincial life, and was in dread of dying of ennui. She, on the contrary, was charmed to return to Guerdache, where all her youth had been passed. Affairs turned out exactly as Delaveau had foreseen; when the settlement of the business took place, the fifteen hundred thousand francs that the Boisgelins expended for the purchase of the works and of Guerdache just covered the Qurignons' embarrassments, so that the Boisgelins became

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absolute owners of both properties, and were under no further necessity of accounting to the two surviving heirs —that is to say, to Aunt Laure, who was a nun, and to André, the poor idiotic creature who was shut up in an asylum. Moreover, Delaveau fulfilled his engagements; he reorganized the workshops, renewed the machinery, and achieved such success in the manufacture of fine steel that at the end of the first year the profits were splendid. In three years' time the Pit had regained its position as one of the most prosperous steel-factories in the country, and the income which its twelve hundred workmen gained for Boisgelin enabled him to install himself at Guerdache in great luxury, with six horses in his stables, five carriages in his coach-house, and to give hunting-parties, fêtes, and dinners to which the dignitaries of the town quarrelled for invitations. Boisgelin, who had missed Paris very much during the first few months, and had found idleness hang heavy on his hands, now began to be habituated to country life, having found a little corner of the earth in which his vanity could reign triumphant, thus becoming once more successful in filling up the emptiness of a life which resembled the buzzing of a useless insect. The easy condescension that he was able to exercise at Beauclair filled him secretly with triumphant self-complaisancy.

Delaveau was installed at the Pit, where he occupied Blaise Qurignon's old house, with his wife, Fernande, and their little girl, Nise, who was only a few months old. He himself was then thirty-seven years of age, and his wife was twenty-seven. He had known her when she was a music-teacher, and he was living in her mother's house on the same floor as herself, in the lower part of a dingy dwelling in the Rue Saint-Jacques. Her beauty was dazzling, but it was so refined and so dignified that for more than a year when he met her upon the stairs he drew back against the wall, ashamed, poor boy, of his homeliness and his poverty. Then they exchanged greetings, an intimacy sprang up, and the mother confided to him that she had lived twelve years in Russia, and that her daughter, with her queenly beauty,

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was all that she had brought back, after being seduced by a prince in whose château she was a governess. The prince, who adored her, would certainly have endowed her with a handsome fortune; but he was dead, having been killed by an accidental gunshot the evening after a hunting-party; and the unfortunate woman, returning to Paris with her little Fernande, and without a sou, had no resource but to resume her occupation of teaching, and was thus enabled to bring up her daughter by her own efforts, dreaming all the while of a magnificent destiny in store for her. Fernande, cradled amid adulation, and convinced that her beauty destined her to a throne, suffered cruelly from the dismal poverty which forced her to make and remake her own hats and dresses, and left her without means to replace her shoes when they were worn out. Rage against such an existence had taken possession of her, and so great a desire for conquest that from the age of ten she had not passed a single day without experiencing hatred, envy, and impatience of hardship, which created within her extraordinary impulses of perversion and destruction. The result of all this was that, under the belief that her beauty could carry everything before it by force of its own power, she was mad enough to give herself to a man of wealth and influence, who abandoned her shortly after. This adventure, which sank deep into the bitterness of her soul, developed in her falsehood, hypocrisy, and deceit—vices which up to that time she had not possessed. She vowed to herself that the same thing should not happen again, for she still retained too much ambition to fall into habitual vice. The failure of her beauty convinced her that to be beautiful was not in itself sufficient to secure success. She must seek an occasion to rise in the world; she must find a man whom she could bewitch, and then make him her obedient creature. Her mother was now dead, after having gone about giving lessons in the mud of Paris for a quarter of a century in order to gain a bare subsistence; and she felt that her opportunity had arisen in the appearance of Delaveau, who was not handsome nor rich, but who offered to marry her. She did not love him,

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but she felt that he was very much in love with her, and she made up her mind to make use of his protection to enter into the world of honest women into which he would be the means of entrance and her protector. He accepted her without even a trousseau, which he furnished himself, having the exalted faith of a devotee who desires nothing of his goddess but herself. From that moment destiny turned out exactly as Fernande willed. Within two months after her husband had introduced her at Guerdache she had seduced Boisgelin, and yielded suddenly to his solicitations one evening, after having studied the position carefully. He was consumed with a passion for her, and he would have expended his whole fortune upon her at the risk of breaking all his other ties. She, on her part, had found her cherished ideal in this handsome man of clubs and horse-races, a lover full of vanity, madness, and prodigality, capable of the very worst actions to retain so beautiful a mistress, if she became indispensable to his self-indulgence. And she was satisfying all kinds of accumulated grievances: her gloomy hatred of her husband, whose laborious life and blind tranquillity humiliated her; her increasing jealousy of the gentle Suzanne, whom she had detested from the first day she saw her; and, indeed, the desire to see her suffer was one of her reasons for accepting the attentions of Boisgelin. Guerdache was now one continuous fête; Fernande reigned there as an acknowledged beauty, having realized the dream of her ambitious life, assisting Boisgelin to squander the money which Delaveau had made by the hard work of twelve hundred workmen at the Pit, and even indulging the hope of one day returning to Paris, to live there in triumph upon the promised millions.

These were the stories Luc revolved in his thoughts while he walked on slowly to accept Suzanne's invitation. If he was not then thoroughly informed of all, he suspected those which a near future was about to reveal to him in even their smallest details. And as he raised his eyes he saw that he was only about a hundred yards from the beautiful park, whose magnificent trees displayed such an in-

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finite variety of green. He paused, a figure rose before him, dominating all the others in his thoughts; it was that of Monsieur Jérôme, the second of the Qurignons, whom he had seen the evening before in his wheeled chair, pushed by a servant, at the very door of the Pit. He saw him again, with his lifeless, withered limbs, dumb, but with clear eyes which for twenty-five years had looked on the disasters that overwhelmed his race. There had been his son Michel, thirsting for pleasure and luxury, ruining the manufactory, and finally destroying himself in a terrible family tragedy. There was his grandson Gustave, stealing his father's mistress, and then having his brains dashed out at the bottom of an abyss, as though he were pursued by the avenging Furies. There was his daughter Laure in a convent, dead to the world; there was his other son, Philippe, married to an abandoned woman, dragged by her into the mire, and killed at last in a duel following upon a revolting scandal; there was his other grandson, André, the last of his name, wrecked in health and confined among the insane. And even now misfortune pursued his house. The plague-spot that was to complete the destruction of the family was that Fernande, who had laid her hold upon them, was, as if to complete their very ruin, gnawing at what remained to them with her little white teeth. In silence he had been witness of all these things. Had he understood them? Had he pronounced judgment on them? His intellect was said to be weakened, yet how clear and penetrating were his eyes! And if he did, indeed, reflect, with what thoughts must his long, motionless hours have then been filled! All his hopes had crumbled to ashes; that victorious strength accumulated by his long line of hard-working progenitors, that energy which he had expended to bequeath to a long line of descendants, and which would unceasingly increase his fortune, had burned out like a wisp of straw in a display of fireworks. The reserve of creative power which had been the result of so many centuries of poverty and effort had been completely exhausted in three generations. Nervous exhaustion, that destroyer which is the result of over-refinement, had sud-

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denly developed in the warm air of a life of luxury. The race, too quickly surfeited, had grown giddy with possession; it had fallen into ruin in the madness of wealth; and that royal domain—that Guerdache which he had purchased, and which he had dreamed of seeing one day peopled by his numerous descendants—by happy couples who would increase the honor of his name, what sadness he must now feel at seeing the half of its apartments vacant, what anger he must surely experience at seeing it now delivered over to this strange woman who had brought with her the last drop of venom in the folds of her robe! He lived there absolutely alone; he kept up tender relations solely with his granddaughter Suzanne, who was the only person whom he received in the vast chamber that he occupied on the ground-floor of his mansion. Long before, when she was only ten years old, Suzanne, a loving little girl, touched by the sad condition of her unfortunate grandfather, had made him the object of her tender care. Then, when she returned after her marriage, upon the purchase of the Pit and of Guerdache, she had insisted that her grandfather should remain with them, although nothing of his fortune was left to him in consequence of the division of his wealth which he had made at the time of his paralytic attack. She had not been without scruples in coming to Guerdache; it seemed to her that she and her husband, by following Delaveau's counsels, had despoiled the remaining members of her family, her aunt Laure, and the afflicted André. Their subsistence, to be sure, was secured to them, and upon her grandfather Jérôme she bestowed great affection, watching over him like a good angel. But although a smile sometimes appeared in the depths of his clear eyes, when he fixed them upon her, they had at other times no more expression in them than in two springs of water. From these unfathomable depths he looked forth and saw the lawless life of Guerdache revolving recklessly around him. Did he observe, did he reflect, and, if so, with what despair must his thoughts be filled?

Luc found himself before the iron gates which opened

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on the road to Formerie, at the spot where that to the little village of Combettes branched off. All he had to do was to push open the side gate and to walk up the royal avenue of elms. At the end of it the château could be seen —a vast building of the seventeenth century, with an air of grandeur in spite of its simplicity. It had a façade with twelve windows, two stories, and a raised *rez-de-chaussée,* the approach to which was by a double porch ornamented with beautiful vases. The park, which was very large, was laid out in lawns and forest trees; it was crossed by the Mionne, which fed a great lake where swans were moving to and fro.

Luc had already turned his steps to the porch, when a light laugh of welcome caused him to turn his head. There, under an oak, near a stone table surrounded by rustic seats, he perceived Suzanne, who was seated beside it, while her son Paul played at her feet.

"Ah, yes, my good friend, I came down here to await my guests, like a country person who is not afraid of the open air. How kind of you to have accepted my short invitation."

And she held out her hand, smiling. She was not pretty, but she was charming. Small, and very fair, with a round, well-turned head, curling hair, and soft blue eyes. Her husband had always considered her lamentably insignificant, never seeming to be aware of the exquisite kindness and solid good sense which were concealed under her air of extreme simplicity.

Luc took her hand, which he held for a moment in both his own.

"It is you who are kindness itself to have thought of me. I am happy—so happy in seeing you again."

She was three years his senior; she had known him when he lived in a miserable house in the Rue de Bercy, near the factory where he had started in life as an assistant engineer. Being a woman of very kind feelings, she attended to her charities herself, and in this way she came to the house of a mason who was left a widower with six children; two of them were very little girls. Luc had

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found Madame Boisgelin in his miserable house, with both the little girls on her lap, one evening when she had come to bring them some linen and food. The acquaintance once made, he had had occasion to visit her *hôtel* in the Parc Monceau, in regard to their common charities. A deep sympathy had drawn them together; little by little he had become her helper, her messenger, in various matters known only to themselves. Thus it happened that he had ended by being frequently at the *hôtel,* that he was invited to her soirées during two winters, and that he had made the acquaintance of the Jordans.

"If you only knew how you are regretted, how you are mourned for!" he added, restricting his allusions to their old companionship in charity to this remark.

She made a gesture expressive of deep feeling, and murmured:

"When I think of you, I have been distressed that you were not here, where there is so much to be done."

But Luc now just perceived Paul, who ran forward, his hands full of flowers, and whom he was surprised to find so much grown. The child was very fair, slender, and smiling; he had an air of extreme gentleness, and greatly resembled his mother.

"Ah," said the latter, gayly, "he will soon be seven years old; then he will be a little man."

They were both seated, talking with great friendliness in the genial warmth of that radiant September day, and so lost in the interest of their kindly recollections that they did not see Boisgelin descend the porch steps and advance towards them. Boisgelin was a tall, foppish-looking man, with gray eyes, a large nose, and a waxed mustache; his brown hair was arranged in curls upon his narrow forehead, where some traces of baldness were already visible; he was very correctly dressed in country costume, and sported a single eye-glass.

"Good-morning, my dear Froment," he cried, in a well-toned voice, but with a somewhat thick accent. "A thousand thanks for having consented to make one of us."

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And, after a hearty shake of the hand in the English manner, he turned without further speech to his wife.

"Tell me, *ma chère,*" he said, "has the order been given to send the victoria for the Delaveaus?"

There was no necessity for Suzanne to reply. The victoria, conveying the family just spoken of, emerged at that moment from the avenue of great elms, and they alighted opposite the stone table. Delaveau was short and strongly built; he had a head like a bull-dog, massive and low, with a projecting lower jaw, and this, together with his flat nose, large, protuberant eyes, and highly colored cheeks, half hidden by a thick fringe of black beard, imparted to his whole appearance something of soldierliness, authority, and rigidity. Fernande, standing beside him, presented a delicious contrast; she was a brunette with blue eyes, and she had a finely formed figure, with a graceful neck and shoulders. The purest and fairest of faces was shaded by magnificent jet-black hair, beneath which her large eyes of deep blue shone with an expression of ardent tenderness; her fresh, delicate mouth displayed tiny teeth, which gave the impression of unchanging brilliancy, and of strength sufficient to break stones. She herself took especial pride in her finely shaped feet, for she considered them an incontestable proof of her princely parentage.

She apologized to Suzanne at once for bringing her maid, who alighted from the victoria, holding in her arms Fernande's little girl, a child three years old, as fair as her mother was dark, with loosely curling hair, eyes the color of the sky, and a rosy mouth which laughed incessantly, displaying dimples in her cheeks and chin.

"*Ma chère,* I took advantage of your kind permission to bring Nise."

"You did quite right," replied Suzanne. "I have told you that there will be a little table served."

The two women appeared to be friends. The appearance, however, was not real, for Suzanne had a slight fluttering of the eyelids when she saw Boisgelin pressing his attentions on Fernande, and she also betrayed her an-

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noyance by displaying satisfaction at the icy manner Fernande assumed on her admirer's attempting to escape from one of her caprices. The atmosphere of uneasiness extended to both Luc and Delaveau, who had met before during the previous spring. They shook hands, but the unexpected presence of this young man at Beauclair seemed to cause the manager of the Pit a kind of shock.

"What! You have been here since yesterday? And you have not found Jordan, of course, because a sudden despatch obliged him to leave for Cannes. . . . Yes, yes, I know all that, but I did not know that you had been summoned. . . . His blast-furnace has occasioned him a great deal of annoyance."

Luc was surprised to see that Delaveau was greatly disturbed by his appearance, so much so that he appeared inclined to inquire why Jordan had summoned him to La Crêcherie. He did not understand the reason of Delaveau's sudden uneasiness, and he answered at haphazard:

"Oh, do you think he has been annoyed? Everything is going on very well."

At this Delaveau discreetly began to talk about something else, and informed Boisgelin, whom he treated with the utmost familiarity, of the purchase for China of a stock of defective shells which were to be remelted. This caused a diversion, during which Luc, who adored children, amused himself by watching Paul give his flowers to Nise, she being a great friend of his. What a pretty little girl she was, so fair that she was like a little sunbeam! And how did she come to be born like this, when both her parents were so dark? Fernande, who upon greeting Luc had cast on him a piercing glance as if to discover whether he were a friend or an enemy, was delighted at his putting this question to her, for it gave her the opportunity of alluding in reply, with a magnificent air, to the child's grandfather, the famous Russian prince.

"Oh, he was a splendid-looking man, fair, with a bright complexion. I am sure Nise will be the image of him."

Boisgelin considered that it was not the correct thing for him to await his guests under an oak-tree, such man-

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ners being in the style of a worthy *bourgeois* retired from business to lead a country life. He caused them all to return to the house, and as he conducted them to the salon they suddenly encountered Monsieur Jérôme, who appeared in his wheeled chair, pushed by his man. The old man had insisted that he should lead a life completely apart, as regarded his hours for meals, his exercise, his rising and retiring; and as he ate alone, and would not permit any one to show him any attention, it had become an established rule in the house that no one should address him. People contented themselves with bowing to him in silence; Suzanne alone smiled at him, and followed him tenderly with her eyes. Monsieur Jérôme was now setting out on one of his long promenades, in which he sometimes passed the whole afternoon out-of-doors; he gazed at them all fixedly, like a being from another world, who returns no salutations. But the icy clearness of his gaze again awoke in Luc a feeling of uneasiness, a painful doubt if all were well.

The salon was an immense and very handsome room, hung with red brocade, and furnished sumptuously in the style of Louis XIV. They had scarcely entered it when the other guests arrived, the sub-prefect Châtelard, followed by the mayor, Gourier, with his wife Leonore and their son Achille. Châtelard was a man of about forty, still handsome, but with a bald head, an aquiline nose, a firm mouth, and large, keen eyes obscured by spectacles; he was a waif from Paris, where he had lost his hair and his digestion, and had then secured the prefecture of Beauclair as a provision for life, through an intimate friend who was a much-reviled minister. He was entirely without ambition, his liver was out of order, and he felt the necessity of a quiet life; at this point he had the good luck to meet the beautiful Madame Gourier, who seemed to have taken permanent possession of him, in an undisturbed liaison. He was kindly regarded by his subordinates, and, it was said, was calmly tolerated by the lady's husband, who had other fancies. Leonore, who at thirty-eight was still beautiful, with large, regular features and

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a fair complexion, manifested profound religious devotion, and had a cold and prudish manner, under which, so those who understood it whispered, was hidden a burning furnace of unrighteous desires. Gourier himself was a fat, vulgar, thick-necked man, with a red, moon face. He never seemed to have any suspicions of his wife, for he spoke of her with a smile of indulgence, and set her aside for the workwomen in his shoe-factory, an industry of some importance, which he had inherited from his father, and in which he himself had amassed a fortune. He had virtually separated from his wife fifteen years before; the only tie which existed between them was their son Achille, a boy of about eighteen, who had his mother's regular features and fine eyes, but with dark coloring, and who already manifested intelligence and a spirit of independence which annoyed and at the same time perplexed his parents. The beautiful Leonore never set foot in her husband's workshops; nevertheless the relations between them were perfect in the eyes of the world; above all, since Châtelard had entered the house such complete content had reigned there that it was everywhere quoted as a pattern. The sub-prefect and the mayor had become inseparable; the municipal government was greatly facilitated by this, and the whole town profited by the fortunate connection.

In addition to these there were other guests: Judge Gaume, who was accompanied by his daughter, Lucille, and followed by the *fiancé* of the latter, a retired captain named Jollivet. Gaume had a long face, a high forehead, and a double chin; he was barely forty-five, but apparently he desired to efface himself completely in the isolation of Beauclair, in consequence of a terrible family tragedy which had wrecked his life. His wife, on being deserted by her lover, had one evening killed herself in his presence after acknowledging her crime. In spite of his cold and severe manner, he had remained secretly inconsolable, and he now suffered through his daughter, whom he adored, and who displayed as she grew up a greater and greater resemblance to her mother. Small,

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graceful, loving, and refined, Lucille, with her soul-destroying eyes looking forth from her clear olive face, recalled to him her mother's fault, and he was filled with such a dread of seeing this fault renewed in her that he betrothed her at twenty to Captain Jollivet, in spite of the bitter loneliness which would be his lot after their separation. This Captain Jollivet had been obliged to retire from active service in consequence of a fever brought back from Madagascar. He looked old for his thirty-five years, but nevertheless he was still a fine-looking man, with an obstinate face and a splendid mustache. He had just inherited an income of twelve thousand francs, and he had then decided to settle at Beauclair, which was his native place, and to marry Lucille, whose languishing, dove-like manners had taken complete possession of him. Judge Gaume, who had no private fortune, and who lived with great economy on his official income, could not refuse such a match. His secret grief, however, seemed to increase, and he had never before manifested so close an attention to legal matters; his judgments were delivered with great severity, and he interpreted the code in the same spirit. Some people said that behind this attitude of an implacable judge he was really a broken-hearted man, a despairing pessimist, who believed in nothing good, not even in human justice. And what must be the suffering of a judge who condemns miserable criminals, and yet doubts whether he has the right to do so!

After these came the Mazelles, with their little girl Louise, who was three years old, and was another guest for the children's table. They were a perfectly happy couple; they were two stout people, of about the same age, being hardly past forty, with a constantly increasing resemblance to each other, for they had each a rosy, smiling face, and the same gentle and paternal manner. They had spent a hundred thousand francs in establishing themselves, after the manner of the *bourgeoisie,* near the Sub-Prefecture, in a nice, comfortable house, surrounded by a very extensive garden; and they lived upon an income of fifteen thousand francs, drawn from government

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securities, that being the only investment sufficiently safe to satisfy them. Their happiness in looking forward to a life with nothing to do had passed into a proverb. People said: "Ah, to be like Monsieur Mazelle, who does nothing! He is a happy man!" But he always answered that he had worked hard for ten years, and that his fortune was due to his own exertions. The truth was that he had been a small coal-dealer, and having married a wife who brought him fifty thousand francs as her *dot,* he had had the wit, or perhaps only the opportunity, to foresee strikes, whose frequency during the last ten years had led to a frequent rise of price in the French coal-mines. His stroke of genius had been in securing for himself, as a stranger, enormous reserves of coal at the lowest possible prices, and then in selling them at enormous profits to manufacturers in France, when they were in danger of being forced to close their factories by reason of the sudden scarcity of fuel. But he had shown himself a truly wise man in retiring from business when he reached forty, and when he had amassed six hundred thousand francs, which, according to his calculations, ought to be sufficient to make his wife and himself perfectly happy. He had not even yielded to the temptation to reach a million, so much did he fear some cruel trick of fortune. There never was a higher triumph of happy egoism; there never was an optimism which had more reason to say that everything in this world turns out for the best than that displayed by these good people who adored each other, and adored their little girl, who had come to them late in life; they presented, in the full satisfaction of their desires, far from all ambition and all excitement, a perfect example of secure happiness, with no desire to look upon the misfortunes of others. The single thorn in their side was that Madame Mazelle, who was very stout and very florid, believed herself to be attacked by a disease without a name, and indefinable as to its nature; but this only gave occasion for greater sympathy, more attention on the part of the husband, who, smiling, spoke with a kind of tender

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vanity of "my wife's complaint," just as he might have said "my wife's remarkable golden hair." It did not occasion him either fear or distress, and he treated it just as he did people's astonishment that their little girl, Louise, should be so different from themselves; for she was dark, thin, and excitable, with a sharp, odd little face, eyes obliquely set, and a delicate little nose. She was a continual amazement to her parents, as if she had fallen from heaven as a gift, in order to create an occasional ruffle in their easy-going home lives, where nothing else disturbed their digestion. The upper-class society of Beauclair was very ready to laugh at the Mazelles, and to call them fatted pullets, but, none the less, they were respected; they were kindly greeted, and invited to entertainments in quarters where their fortune gave them an advantage over hard workers, poorly paid officials, and even millionaire capitalists who were always in dread of what might happen.

Only one more guest was expected; he was the Abbé Marle, the curé of Saint Vincent, the rich parish of Beauclair; he only arrived at the very moment when they had decided to go into the dining-room. He excused himself on the ground of having been detained by his duties. He was tall and strong, with a square face, an aquiline nose, a large mouth, and an expression of great firmness. He was still young, being only thirty-six, and he would willingly have fought for the faith had not a slight impediment in his speech rendered preaching very difficult to him. This explains why he resigned himself to being buried alive at Beauclair, though his closely cut brown hair and his black, decided eyes belonged to the military life which once he had dreamed of leading. But he was not without discernment, and he bore himself with loyalty during the crisis through which Catholicism was then passing, not admitting the dread which he sometimes felt when he saw his Church deserted by the people; and he held strictly to the letter of dogma, feeling sure that the old establishment would be swept away on the day when science and freedom of thought should enter into it. He accepted invitations to Guerdache without any illusions as to the vir-

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tue of the *bourgeoisie,* and he breakfasted or dined there in some sort as a duty, in order to conceal, under the mantle of religion, suffering which he knew existed there.

Luc was charmed with the brightness and the pleasant luxury of the dining-room—an immense apartment occupying one entire corner of the ground-floor, and overlooking, through its lofty windows, the grassy lawns and beautiful trees of the park. It seemed almost as though the verdure without had entered the apartment itself, for the room, which was in the style of Louis XVI., with its pearl-gray wood-work and delicate sea-green tints, was such a hall as we imagine in an ideal fairy festival. And the richness of the table, the snowy damask, the glitter of silver and glass, the flowers with which the whole was strewn, completed the feast of the eye with a wonderful display of light and perfume. The sensation induced by all this was so keen that it suddenly roused in Luc a remembrance of the previous evening. He saw the troop of famished wretches tramping in the mire of the Rue de Brias, the puddlers and furnace-men whose flesh was baked in the infernal fires of the furnaces; above all, he saw the miserable lodging of the Bonnaires, with the unfortunate Josine, seated on a step of the staircase, relieved from gnawing hunger for one evening by the bread which her little brother had stolen. Out of what unjust poverty, what accursed labor, what execrable suffering was this luxury of the idle and fortunate created!

There were fifteen at table, and Luc found himself placed between Fernande and Delaveau. Boisgelin had Madame Mazelle on his right, and, contrary to all precedent, he had taken in Fernande, who sat upon his left. This place should have been Madame Gourier's; but in houses where she was intimate it was understood that Leonore should be seated near her friend the prefect Châtelard. The latter naturally occupied the place of honor on Suzanne's right, and on her left was Judge Gaume. The Abbé Marle was seated beside Leonore, who was his most devoted and favorite penitent. Gourier was next to Madame Mazelle, and Mazelle sat next to the judge. Lastly,

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the engaged couple, Captain Jollivet and Lucille, were at one end of the table, opposite young Achille Gourier, who sat silent between Delaveau and the abbé. Suzanne, with great discretion, had had the children's table placed just behind herself, and there the seven-year-old Paul presided between the three-year-old Nise and the three-year-old Louise, both of whom fidgeted with their little hands, which they moved about among the plates and glasses. A maid kept watch over them, and the large table was served by two footmen, assisted by the coachman.

With the stuffed eggs, which were accompanied with Sauterne, a general conversation sprang up, and they spoke of the bread which was being made at Beauclair.

"I cannot become accustomed to it," said Boisgelin. "Their best bread is uneatable, and I send to Paris for mine."

He said this with simplicity, and every one regarded the rolls that they were eating with respect. But the terrible events of the evening before were in all minds, and Fernande exclaimed:

"*Apropos,* do you know that there was a robbery yesterday in a baker's shop in the Rue de Brias?"

Luc could not refrain from laughing.

"Oh, madame, a robbery! . . . I was there. A wretched child stole some bread!"

"We were there also," said Captain Jollivet, annoyed at the young man's tone, which was full of compassion and apology. "It is much to be regretted that they did not arrest the child; at least it would have been an example."

"Certainly, certainly," answered Boisgelin. "It appears that there is a great deal of robbery during this confounded strike. . . . They tell me that a woman actually forced the money-drawer in a butcher's shop. All the tradesmen complain that the vagabonds fill their pockets at their windows. . . . And yet here is our beautiful new prison all ready to receive lodgers. Is it not, Monsieur le Président?"

Judge Gaume was about to reply, when the captain resumed, with violence:

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"Yes, robbery committed with impunity engenders pillage and assassination. The temper of the working population is becoming alarming. Did you not observe yesterday evening, those of you who were there, as I did, the spirit of revolt and of menace at which the whole town trembled? . . . That fellow Lange, moreover, that anarchist, did you not understand what he intended to do? He called out to you that he intended to blow up Beauclair and raze it to the ground. . . . Since he is now in custody, I hope that they are going to take it out of him properly."

Jollivet's rudeness annoyed everybody. That flutter of terror of which he spoke had been felt by all the others as well as by himself upon the previous evening, but what use was there in recalling it, in reviving it, at that genial table, loaded with beautiful and enjoyable things? A shudder went round; a dread of the morrow made itself felt in the silence that followed; all these *bourgeoisie* were uneasy, while the servants at this stage of the repast were handing river trout.

Delaveau, feeling that the silence was becoming oppressive, broke into it by saying:

"Lange is a dangerous character. . . . The captain is right; let us hold him fast since we have got him."

But Judge Gaume shook his head; and his severe manner and stern face would never have betrayed that there was any feeling behind his professional rigidity when he said:

"I must inform you that this morning the *juge d'instruction,* acting in accordance with my opinion, decided to release the man, after a simple interrogation."

All those present exclaimed, hiding a real fear under an exaggerated jest:

"Oh, Judge Gaume, how can you really wish to see our throats cut?"

Gaume did not reply, except by a slow movement of his hand, which might signify a great many things. His hearers would certainly learn nothing from an excited explanation, where importance might be attached to care-

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less words, which might germinate at a distance the more widely they were spread.

Jollivet calmed down, and sat biting his mustache, not wishing openly to contradict his future father-in-law. But the sub-prefect Châtelard, who up to this moment had contented himself with smiling in the affable manner of a man who comprehends everything, exclaimed:

"Ah, how well I understand you, judge! You have acted on what I call excellent political principles. . . . Ah, no; the temper of the masses is not worse at Beauclair than elsewhere. The same spirit is to be met with in other places; we must try to accommodate ourselves to it, and the best plan is to prolong the actual condition of things as long as possible, for it seems certain that the day on which it is changed all will be for the worse."

Luc fancied that he detected a hidden irony in the speech of this old Parisian, who must be secretly amused at the stupid terror of the provincial *bourgeoisie*. Châtelard's own political position, moreover, was one of the most complete indifference, no matter what minister was in power. He represented the old governmental machine which continued to run of itself, by its own impetus, grinding and jarring, and which would fall completely out of order and crumble into dust as soon as a new social order should be introduced. "At the end of the ditch look out for a fall," as he himself frequently remarked when laughing among his intimates. Things would go on because they were started, but at the first serious shock the whole would fall to pieces. The futile efforts made to strengthen the old rattletrap, the timid reforms that were attempted, the superfluous laws that were passed even while no one dared to put the existing ones in action, the furious cries caused by the ambitions of prominent persons, the raging and storming of parties—all these only aggravated the situation, only hastened the dissolution of the system. Such a *régime* must be surprised each morning to find itself still in existence, and must fully expect to be overturned the next day. He himself, not being an imbecile, was disposed to accept things as they were just as long as the

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régime lasted. Being a wise republican, as he found it necessary to be, he represented a government which was too just to remain in power, and he did nothing beyond what was necessary, wishing above everything to live in peace with its administrators. And when everything crumbled to pieces he would endeavor not to be buried under the ruins.

"You see," he concluded, "that this miserable strike, which has caused us all so much trouble, has ended as well as possible."

Gourier, the mayor, had not the ironical philosophy of the sub-prefect; and, although they were always in accord, which greatly facilitated the good administration of the city, he protested:

"Excuse me, excuse me, my dear friend; too many concessions will lead us farther than we ought to go. I know the laboring-classes; I love them; I am an old republican, no new democrat; I have been one all my life. But although I concede to laborers the right to ameliorate their lot, I will never accept their subversive theories; such socialistic ideas will be the ruin of all civilized society."

The trembling of his thick voice betrayed the terror that he had just experienced, the ferocity a *bourgeois* feels when he is threatened, the repression of his real feelings, which had been displayed for a moment, when he wanted to order out the military and drive the strikers back to their work at the point of the bayonet.

"I myself have done everything for the workmen in my workshops: they have aid associations, retiring pensions, cheap lodging-houses, all the comforts imaginable. But what then? What more do they want? . . . We seem to be coming to the end of all things, do we not, Monsieur Delaveau?"

Up to this moment the manager of the Pit had eaten his breakfast with a good appetite, and had listened to the conversation without taking part in it.

"Oh, the end of all things," he said, quietly. "I hope we shall not let things come to an end without a struggle to keep them going. . . . I agree with monsieur the sub-

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prefect; the strike is, very happily, ended. I have received very gratifying intelligence in regard to Bonnaire, the socialist, the ringleader, whom, you know, I was forced to take back. Well, he has executed justice on himself, for he left the factory yesterday evening. He was an excellent workman, but what would you have? He was a dangerous man, with a disordered brain. . . . Ah, these dreams—it is they that make men fall over precipices!"

He continued in the same strain, trying to show himself very honest and very just. Every one had a right to protect his own interests. When laborers started a strike, they believed themselves to be defending theirs. It was his part, being manager of the factory, to insure the safety of the capital, the stock, and the property which had been confided to him. He was quite willing to be lenient, for he felt himself the stronger. His sole duty was to protect what was already in existence, to keep up the wages system, as it had been gradually organized by the wisdom of experience. All practical truth was represented in it; outside of it there was nothing but injurious dreams; the dream of co-operation, for instance, the application of which would result in the most overwhelming evils. He spoke of syndicates, which he bitterly opposed, having divined in them a powerful instrument of warfare. He himself had been successful simply by virtue of being an active worker and a good administrator, and he considered himself only too fortunate that the strike had not done any further harm, and that it had not led to actual disaster by preventing his keeping the engagements for that year which he had undertaken in partnership with his cousin.

At this point the two footmen served roast partridges, while the coachman, who attended to the wine, offered Saint Emilion.

"Come," said Boisgelin, gayly; "it is very evident that we are not going to be reduced to a diet of potatoes, and none of us need feel remorse for eating the wing of a partridge."

A burst of laughter greeted this sally, which the guests seemed to consider very witty.

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"I will certify to that," said Delaveau, laughing with the others. "We may sleep and eat in peace; the revolution which is to destroy your incomes will not come tomorrow."

Luc sat silent, and his heart was hot within him. It was the labor of others upon which this wages system, this capital throve. If five francs were invested, and the laborer made them produce seven francs, the owner of the capital devoured two. Delaveau, however, labored; he used his brain and his muscles; but Boisgelin, who had never done a stroke of work, what right had he to live and to feast in such luxury? Luc was also struck by the attitude of his neighbor Fernande; she was very much interested in this conversation, although it was on a subject little adapted to women; she exhibited excitement and delight at the defeat of the strikers, and at the triumph of that money which she seemed ready to seize with her little wolf's teeth. Her rosy lips were drawn backward, and displayed these sharp teeth in a laugh of exquisite cruelty, as if at last both her rancor and her wishes had been satisfied. She was sitting opposite to the sweet woman whom she had injured, between her gallant lover, whom she completely ruled, and her hoodwinked husband, who was to earn millions for her in the future. She seemed intoxicated with the flowers, the wines, the dainty viands, and, above all, she appeared to revel in the iniquitous joy of utilizing her radiant beauty to carry disorder and destruction into this household.

"Is there not some talk of a fête for charity at the Sub-Prefecture?" asked Suzanne, softly, of Châtelard. "Let us speak of something besides politics; do you not think so?"

The sub-prefect, in the most gallant manner, at once expressed himself of her opinion.

"Certainly," he said; "we are inexcusable. . . . I will give as many fêtes as you like, *chère madame.*"

The conversation then broke up, each person returning to his own theme. The Abbé Marle contented himself with nodding approval to certain observations made by Dela-

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veau, very prudent in the main, in which he bewailed the indifference to business displayed by the master of the house, the scepticism of the sub-prefect, and the formal hostility of the mayor, who affected to adopt anti-clerical ideas. The abbé felt deeply the rottenness of that society which it was his duty to uphold, and which would certainly end in a complete downfall! His only consolation was the devoted sympathy of the beautiful Leonore, his neighbor, who was occupied solely with him, and said pleasant things to him in a low voice, while the others were disputing. He knew she also lived in sin, but she confessed it, and he could already picture her in the confessional, accusing herself of having enjoyed too greatly the pleasure of sitting next to Châtelard, whose knee was tenderly touching her beneath the table. The good Mazelle sat, entirely overlooked, between Judge Gaume and Captain Jollivet. Up to this time he had only opened his mouth to put into it large mouthfuls of food, which he masticated slowly for fear of disordering his digestion. Social economics did not interest him, since, thanks to the nature of his income, he was beyond risk from storms. But he was forced to lend an ear to the theories of the captain, who was delighted to impart them to so kindly an auditor. The army was the school for the nation, and France could never be anything, according to her immutable traditions, but the land of a warlike people; she would recover her proper place only on the day when she reconquered Europe and ruled it by the sword. It was foolish to accuse the system which sent young men to perform military service of disorganizing labor. Whose labor? What labor? Was there any such thing? Socialism was an immense humbug! There would always be soldiers, and peoples under them for fatigue duty. The sword was something tangible which could be seen, but who had ever seen an idea, this famous idea, which people pretended was the queen of the world? He laughed at his own wit, and the kind-hearted Mazelle, who had a profound respect for the army, laughed with him out of complaisance, while

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his *fiancée,* Lucille, regarded him with an expression of enigmatical tenderness, examining him in silence, with a peculiar smile, as though she was amused at the idea of some day seeing him in the character of her husband. Young Achille Gourier, seated at the other end of the table, preserved silence, in the double character of a witness and a judge, his eyes bright with the contempt he felt for the family and the friends with whom he was compelled by circumstances to share this meal.

At this moment, just as the *pâtés de foie de canard,* which were wonders of cookery, were being served, a new voice was heard by the whole table. It was the voice of Madame Mazelle, who up to this time had been mute, being entirely occupied with her breakfast, for her complaint required nourishing food. Boisgelin had taken no notice of her, being entirely occupied with Fernande, and she fell back accordingly on Gourier, to whom she detailed her household affairs, her perfect understanding with her husband, and her views in regard to the future education of her daughter Louise.

"I do not wish her to kill herself with study. No, indeed! Why should she exert herself more than she likes? She is our only child, and she will inherit all our property."

Luc was suddenly moved to utter a protest out of a pure spirit of mischief, and wholly without reflection.

"You are not aware then, madame," he said, "that the laws of inheritance are to be abolished? Oh yes; very shortly; as soon as our new social relations have been organized!"

Every one at table perceived the joke, and Madame Mazelle's stupor was so amusing to witness that they all tried to keep up the jest. Inheritance abolished! What an infamous thing! Was money earned by a father to be snatched from his children? And were they to be compelled to work in their turn for a living! But, of course, that would be the logical outcome of socialism. Mazelle, although he was somewhat alarmed, came to his wife's assistance, saying that he was not uneasy, that all his fort-

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une was in government bonds, and that they would never dare to touch the national debt.

"That is where you are mistaken, monsieur," answered Luc, quietly. "They will burn up the register of the bondholders and abolish all interest. That measure is already decided on."

Both the Mazelles were stupefied. Interest abolished! This seemed to them as impossible as the effacement of the heavens above their heads. They were so lost in astonishment, so terrified by this threat of a reversal of the laws of nature, that Châtelard had the kindness to reassure them in a jesting manner by turning half round to the children's table where Nise and Louise, in spite of Paul's good example, were not behaving properly.

"Oh no, no! All that is not going to happen just yet. Your little girl will have time to grow up and have children in her turn. . . . Only, at present, it would be a good plan to have her shaved, for I think she must have put her face into the cream."

Laughter and jest continued. All present, however, had felt the great wind of to-morrow pass over them; the breath of the future swept across the table, blowing away its iniquitous luxury and its poisonous pleasures. They all, therefore, began to talk about questions of interest, of capital, of *bourgeois* society and capitalists, all of which are based on the wage system.

"The republic will destroy itself when it interferes with property," said Gourier, the mayor.

"The laws are still in force, but everything will give way when they are no longer administered," said Judge Gaume.

"What does it matter, in any event?" said Captain Jollivet; "the army is here for our protection, and it will never permit these rascals to triumph."

Boisgelin and Delaveau assented approvingly to these sentiments, for the present social forces worked in their interest. Luc understood the situation. The government, the ministry, the magistracy, the army, and the Church, all were engaged in sustaining this terrible social system,

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this monstrous frame-work of iniquity, by means of which labor destroyed the many in order that the few might be maintained in luxury and corruption. The dreadful things he had seen the evening before came back to him. He had looked into the lower regions, and now he saw the surface of that society which was even then undergoing decomposition, its structure being on the point of falling in every direction. And even here, amid all this luxury, this excess of ornament, he had just heard the warning note; he perceived that those around him were uneasy, and that, having lost their heads, they were running to the mouth of the abyss, like all frightened people who are beside themselves at the idea of a revolution. Dessert was served, and the table was loaded with creams, pastry, and magnificent fruit. In order to finish cheering the Mazelles they took occasion, when the champagne was served, to make a eulogium upon idleness, divine idleness, as something too good for this world. The immense dining-room, so gay and cheerful, was now filled with a pleasant light that came through the great trees, and Luc became very thoughtful, for he suddenly began to understand the thoughts that filled his mind, and grew fearful of the future, in the presence of these people who represented the unjust and tyrannical authority of the past.

Coffee was served in the salon, and afterwards Boisgelin proposed a walk in the park as far as the farm. He had devoted himself during breakfast exclusively to Fernande, who persisted in making him keep his distance. She refused to allow him to touch her under the table, keeping her brilliant smiles for the sub-prefect, who sat opposite to her. She had kept up this sort of behavior for a week. She invariably treated him with gentle severity when he permitted himself to hesitate before obeying any one of her caprices. The cause of their present quarrel was that she insisted he should give a hunting-party, simply in order that she might enjoy the pleasure of wearing a new costume. He had gone so far as to manifest unwillingness, for the expense would be very great; and, moreover, Suzanne, being warned of the

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scheme on foot, had begged him to be careful. The result of this was that the matter had resolved itself into a struggle between the two women, and now the question of moment was which of them would carry the day, the mistress or the wife. Suzanne, with her sweet and sad expression, had lost nothing during breakfast of Fernande's assumed coldness and her husband's uneasy attentions. Thus, when the latter proposed a walk, she comprehended that it was simply because he sought an opportunity to be alone with the offended lady, in order to excuse himself and to win back her favor. Deeply hurt, but wholly incapable of contention, she withdrew within her dignity in silent suffering, saying that she should remain behind in order to entertain the Mazelles, who, for hygienic reasons, never took exercise after leaving the table. Judge Gaume, his daughter Lucille, and Captain Jollivet also declared that they would not go; and then the Abbé Marle proposed to the judge a game of chess. Young Achille Gourier had already taken leave, delighted to regain his freedom of thought in the open country, under pretence that he was preparing for an examination. Thus, then, the strollers were Boisgelin himself, the sub-prefect, the Delaveau family, the Gouriers, and Luc, who set out for the farm, proceeding slowly across the park among the trees.

Their order of march when they set out was highly proper; the five men walked in a group, while Fernande and Leonore followed, apparently in close conversation. Boisgelin enlarged on the uncertainties of agriculture: farming, he said, meant bankruptcy, and all farmers were on the road to ruin. Châtelard and Gourier entered at once on the terrible problem, without solution, which arises from this subject; for in order that the industrial workman shall be able to produce, bread must be cheap, and if wheat is selling at a low price, the peasant is ruined, and does not buy the products of industry. Delaveau believed that the solution was to be found in an intelligent protection. Luc, to whom the question was of passionate interest, obtained all possible information from Boisgelin,

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who at last admitted that his own despair arose from continual difficulties with his farmer, Feuillat, whose exactions increased from year to year. He should certainly be obliged to part with him when the question of renewing his lease arose, the farmer having asked a reduction of ten per cent. on the price of the farm; and the worst part of it all was that, having reason to fear that his lease might not be renewed, he had ceased to care for the land, and no longer manured it, saying that he was under no obligation to work for the benefit of his successor. In consequence of this, the land, being unfertilized, was gradually going to ruin.

"And it is the same everywhere," said Boisgelin. "There is no common understanding between laborers and masters. Laborers wish to take the place of proprietors, and in the quarrel between the two the cultivation of the land suffers. . . . Look there! at Combettes; in that village, whose land is separated from mine only by the road to Formerie, you cannot imagine the lack of intelligence displayed there, and the efforts that each peasant makes to injure his neighbor, by which he paralyzes himself. . . . Ah, the feudal system had its good points; all the worthless men in those days went to the wars, if they had no property and knew that they would never have any."

Luc smiled at this unexpected conclusion. But he was struck by the unconscious inference that the supposed failure of the soil was occasioned by the lack of intelligence. But as they now came out of the park, his gaze rested on an immense plain, on that Roumagne which was formerly so celebrated for its fertility, and which is now said to be so barren that it no longer produces enough to feed its inhabitants. To the left he saw spread out the vast extent of the farm, while on the right he saw the miserable roofs of Combettes, round which were grouped fields marked out with many divisions, little pieces of land broken off by the law of inheritance, until the whole resembled a piece of goods made up of shreds and patches. And what could be done to re-establish the good understanding that was wanting—how out of all these futile,

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contradictory experiments could suddenly come forth a system formulated upon mutual interests, and framed for the help and happiness of all parties?

Just as they approached the farm-house, which was a large and well-kept building, they heard the sounds of oaths, of fists struck on the table, and all the violent accompaniments of a quarrel. Then two peasants came out of the house, one fat and sullen, the other thin and in a raging passion; they exchanged a few parting threats, and then they separated, cutting across the fields towards Combettes, each by a different road.

"What is all that about, Feuillat?" Boisgelin asked the farmer, who appeared on the threshold.

"Oh, it is nothing, monsieur. . . . It is only two men from Combettes who have a difference about a boundary, and they asked me to act as referee. For years and years, from father to son, the Lenfants and the Yvonnots have quarrelled, until now it enrages them even to see each other. I have done my best to make them hear reason, but you have seen for yourself that they are ready to tear each other's eyes out. And it is only their own stupidity. *Mon Dieu!* they who would be so well off, if they would only reflect and understand in the slightest degree!"

Then, provoked no doubt with himself for having permitted this reflection to escape him, since it was not a good thing to say before the landlord, he lowered his glance, and assumed an indifferent tone and a dull, unmeaning expression.

"Will the ladies and gentlemen do me the honor to come in and rest a few moments?"

Luc, having seen his eyes glitter, was surprised to now find him so dull, so indifferent, as if his tall, thin figure had been already burned up by toiling in the hot sun, though he was barely forty years old. He was, notwithstanding, keenly intelligent, as Luc presently perceived, when he heard him converse with Boisgelin. The latter had asked him, with a jocular air, whether he had considered the question of rent. The farmer shook his head, and answered very briefly, like a diplomat desirous of gain-

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ing a point. Evidently he kept his real thoughts in reserve: these were that the soil ought to belong to those who cultivated it; it should belong to all who loved it, and who exerted themselves to improve it. To love the soil! and he shrugged his shoulders. His father and his grandfather had loved these acres passionately. What use had their affection for them been to them? He himself would wait until he could bestow his affection upon land he could improve and fertilize for himself and those belonging to him, and not for a proprietor whose only idea was to add to the rent as soon as the harvest should be doubled. And there was yet another idea which lurked behind his muttered words, and inspired his clear vision of the future —that there ought to be a good understanding among the peasants themselves, whose fields, now so cut up and divided, could be held in common and cultivated on a large scale by means of modern improvements. It was ideas such as these that he had acquired little by little, which he considered the master had no right to know of; nevertheless, they occasionally escaped him in spite of himself. The party finished their inspection of the farm by entering the house and sitting down for a few minutes, and Luc noticed for the second time the coldness and bareness of the walls, and a certain smell of labor and of poverty which had struck him so forcibly the evening before at the house of the Bonnaires in the Rue des Trois Lunes. Feuillat's wife was there, a withered woman, indifferent, silent, and resigned, like her husband. They had an only child, Léon, a big boy, twelve years old, who already assisted his father. This accursed never-ending labor seemed to Luc to be everywhere, with the peasant as well as with the artisan; it became a mark of inferiority; it carried dishonor with it; it did not even furnish a bare subsistence to the slave, on whom perpetual toil was riveted as though it were a chain.

In the neighboring village of Combettes suffering was certainly much greater, for in these sordid hovels the people led the existence of domestic animals, except that they subsisted on soup—the Lenfants with their son Arsène

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and their daughter Olympe, the Yvonnots, who had also two children, Eugénie and Nicolas, all lived like swine in a filthy sty of poverty, aggravating their ills by mutual hatred. Luc listened, observed, and analyzed that social hell, saying to himself that the solution of the problem was, nevertheless, to be found there, for whenever society should be reconstructed, it would be absolutely necessary to turn to the earth herself, the eternal nurse, the common mother, who alone could assure to men their daily bread.

On leaving the farm, Boisgelin said to Feuillat:

"Then you will think over it, my good man? The soil has improved; it is only fair that I should profit by it."

"Oh, the matter is settled, monsieur," answered the farmer. "I may as well perish of hunger on the road as on your property."

In returning to Guerdache the ladies and gentlemen took a different road through the park; it was more solitary and more shaded than that by which they had come, and different groups formed themselves. The sub-prefect and Leonore lingered behind, and soon found themselves the rear of the party, at a considerable distance from the rest, and were quite contented to converse placidly on terms of established intimacy. Boisgelin and Fernande by degrees separated themselves from the rest, and finally disappeared, as if they had mistaken their way, misled by cross paths, in their absorbing conversation. The two husbands, Gourier and Delaveau, quietly continued their walk along the principal road, discussing an article on the close of the strike which had appeared in the *Journal de Beauclair,* a newspaper which had about five hundred subscribers, and which was published by a man named Lebleu, a clerical bookseller in a small way. To this paper the Abbé Marle and Captain Jollivet both contributed articles. The mayor regretted that religion should have been brought into the affair, although he approved highly, as did the manager of the Pit, of the song of triumph, in which the victory of capital over labor had been celebrated in the paper in lyrical style. Luc, who walked beside them, was bored by their conversation, and at last, getting tired

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of it, he manœuvred in such a way as to leave them at a distance, and then he struck into the woods, being sure that he should be able to reach Guerdache in the end.

How adorable was the solitude in that thick forest, through which the warm September sun shed a cloud of golden beams! For some time he walked on at haphazard, delighted to be alone, and to breathe freely in the open air, rejoicing at feeling himself relieved of a weight which had stifled him, for all these people weighed upon his brain and on his heart. He was, however, considering how to rejoin them, when he suddenly emerged in a wide field near the road to Formerie, in the midst of which was a large lake fed by a little branch of the Mionne. The scene on which he had stumbled amused him very much, and made him feel at once charmed and hopeful.

He saw before him Paul Boisgelin, who had just obtained permission to bring his two child guests there, Nise Delaveau and Louise Mazelle, whose little feet did not permit them at their age to go very far. Their nurses were lounging and gossiping under a willow-tree, and paid very little attention to the children. But the interesting part of the adventure was that the future heir of Guerdache and the two little creatures still in pinafores had found the lake already occupied by an invasion of the populace—that is, by three little gamins who must have climbed over the wall, or crawled under the hedge. Luc, to his great surprise, recognized Nanet as the head and the chief spirit of the expedition, and he was accompanied by Lucien and Antoinette Bonnaire, whom he must have tempted to wander so far from the Rue des Trois Lunes, in their enjoyment of a Sunday holiday. The real explanation was that Lucien had invented a little boat that could move alone, and Nanet had offered and even insisted on taking him to a lake which he knew of, a beautiful lake, where they would never meet any one. The little boat was now really moving alone on the clear water, which was without a ripple.

The truth was simply that Lucien had had the inspiration to make use of a mechanical toy, in the shape of a

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little carriage on wheels, a plaything that cost nineteen sous, and he had fitted the wheels, after providing them with paddles, to a boat hollowed out of a piece of wood. This was able to go about ten yards after being wound up. The only difficulty was that it was then necessary to hook back the boat with a pole, and every time this operation was repeated it threatened to submerge the vessel.

Paul and his two guests remained standing on the edge of the lake, petrified with astonishment. Louise, above all, with her eyes shining in her thin little face like a goat's, was carried away by an inordinate desire to handle it. She stretched out her little hands, crying:

"I want it; I want it. . . ."

Then she ran to Lucien, who had just drawn back the boat with the stick, in order to wind it up. Good-natured pleasure in their play drew them together. They treated each other with great familiarity.

"I made it myself, you know."

"Oh, let me see! Give it to me."

Lucien did not wish to do so, and at first he attempted to protect his property against the mischievous little hands.

"Ah, no; not that way; I have had so much trouble. . . . You will break it. Let go."

Nevertheless, he wished to please her; he found her gay and pleasant manner very attractive.

"I will make you another one, if you wish."

And as he put the boat back in the water, and the wheels revolved anew, she acquiesced, she clapped her hands, and being pleased with him in her turn, she sat down beside him on the turf, and, growing very friendly, she refused to leave him.

Paul, who, being seven years old, was the eldest of the party, had a confused idea that he ought to obtain some information in regard to the strangers. He addressed himself to Antoinette, whose rosy, pretty face and good-natured air emboldened him.

"How old are you?" he asked.

"I am four years old; but papa says that I look as if I were six."

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"Who is your papa?"

"Papa is papa! How stupid you are to ask such a thing."

She laughed so prettily that he found the answer sufficient, and did not inquire further. In his turn he seated himself beside her, and they were immediately the best friends in the world. She was so attractive, with her look of health, and her air of knowing everything, that he did not notice her shabby little woollen frock.

"And you," she asked, "is it your papa who owns all these trees? Ah, what a fine place you have to play in! We got in by that hole in the hedge, down below there."

"They will not let me do that. They will not let me come here, because they are afraid that I might fall into the water. And yet it is so amusing! But we must not say anything about it, or they would punish us."

At this moment a dramatic accident occurred. Nanet, fair and smiling, was much attracted by Nise, who was even fairer and more smiling than himself. They seemed like two playmates, and they ran towards each other at once, as if their meeting was a foreordained thing and they had expected it. Already they were holding each other's hands, and they laughed in each other's faces, making believe to push each other down. Then Nanet, who wished to seem like a man, cried:

"There is no need of a stick to get his boat. . . . I will go into the water for it."

Nise, who had a weakness for unusual games, agreed to this proposal with enthusiasm.

"That's it! We must go into the water, but we must take off our shoes."

And then she leaned over until she nearly fell into the pond. All her boasted courage abandoned her at once, and she gave a piercing shriek when she felt the water wetting her shoes. Nanet rushed bravely forward and seized her in his little arms, which were already very strong; he bore her off as if she were a conquered trophy. and deposited her on the grass, where she began to laugh, and resumed her play, both of them wrestling together

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and rolling over each other like two little kids. But the shriek which her fright had caused her to utter roused the two nurses from their gossiping under the willows. When they rose to their feet they were thunderstruck at seeing these little invaders, these little vagabonds, fallen from they did not know where, who were taking this opportunity to lead astray the *bourgeois* children under their charge. And they rushed forward with such fury that Lucien hastily snatched up his boat and took to his heels, in terror lest they should confiscate it; he was followed by Antoinette, and even by Nanet, carried away by panic. They rushed to the hedge, threw themselves flat on their stomachs, rolled under it, and disappeared, while the two nurses conducted the three children back to Guerdache, entirely agreeing with them that it was best to say nothing of the adventure for fear of being blamed.

Luc enjoyed a solitary laugh, being greatly amused by this little scene, which he had surprised under the fatherly sun, in the midst of nature, the good friend of all men. Ah! these blessed little creatures, how quickly they understood each other, how easily they settled all difficulties, in their ignorance of fratricidal struggles, and how triumphant was the dream of the future which the scene had suggested! In another five minutes he himself was returning to Guerdache, where he relapsed into the odious present, poisoned with selfishness, and found himself on a battle-field raging with evil passions. It was four o'clock, and the guests were taking leave.

He was struck by the sight of Monsieur Jérôme in his wheeled chair a little to the left of the porch. He had just returned from his long outing, and had signed to the servant to leave him for a moment in that spot in the warm sunshine, as though he wished to take part in the farewells of the guests. Suzanne, standing on the porch among these gentlemen and ladies about to depart, was waiting for her husband, who had lingered behind with Fernande. All the other walkers had returned some minutes when she saw these two returning with tranquil steps, engaged in conversation, with an air of thinking that

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this long solitude *à deux* was the most natural thing in the world. She did not ask for any explanation, but Luc perceived that her hands trembled slightly, while an expression, both sad and bitter, mingled with the forced smile which she assumed in the character of a courteous hostess. And when Boisgelin, addressing himself to Captain Jollivet, said that he was coming to see him, in order to consult with him about organizing the hunting-party, which up to this time he had had vaguely in his mind, the wound to his wife's feelings was so severe that she could not keep from trembling. The thing was done, the wife was defeated, the mistress had triumphed, and had imposed on Boisgelin her expensive and mad caprice during this walk, which had all the impropriety of a public rendezvous. Suzanne's spirit rose in revolt; why did she not take her child and leave him? Then, with visible effort, she calmed herself, and assumed again the part which she had resolved upon—that of a good woman sacrificing herself to preserve the honor of her name and of her house by a silent life of heroic tenderness amid surrounding evil. And Luc, who divined all this, perceived the suffering that she was undergoing only in the trembling of her poor feverish hand when he pressed it on taking leave of her.

Monsieur Jérôme had followed the scene with his unfathomable gaze, and Luc asked himself with painful interest whether he still possessed thought and intelligence enough to understand and condemn, as he sat watching the departure of the guests as though it were a procession of human forces, of social authorities, of the masters who set the example for the people.

Châtelard started out in a barouche, with Gourier and Leonore, the latter of whom offered a place to the Abbé Marle, so that she and the abbé sat side by side on the back seat, while the sub-prefect and the mayor sat amicably opposite to them. Captain Jollivet, who was driving himself in a hired tilbury, escorted Judge Gaume and his *fiancée* Lucille, whose father watched her turtle-dove airs and graces with uneasiness. Then the Mazelles, who had

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come in an immense landau, climbed into it, and departed to a luxurious afternoon nap, by which they finished cosseting their digestions. According to the rule of the house, they took no notice of Monsieur Jérôme except to bow to him, but he followed them with his gaze as a child's eyes follow passing shadows, without any feeling whatever appearing on his face of stone.

Only the Delaveaus remained, and the manager of the Pit was very anxious to take Luc with him in Boisgelin's victoria, in order, he said, to save him the walk. Nothing could be easier than to leave him at his own door, since they would pass before La Crêcherie. As there was only room for one on the back seat, Fernande would take Nise on her lap, and the nurse would sit beside the coachman. Delaveau insisted upon this with the utmost obligingness.

"I assure you, Monsieur Froment, it will be a real pleasure to me."

Luc found himself obliged to accept. Boisgelin, with a great lack of tact, returned to the subject of the hunting-party, and was anxious to know if the young man would be still at Beauclair to take part in it. Luc replied that he did not know, but that he must not be counted upon. Suzanne listened to him with a smile. Then her eyes moistened at his brotherly sympathy, and she offered him her hand a second time.

"Au revoir, mon ami."

And, as the victoria drove off, Luc met for the last time the eyes of Monsieur Jérôme, which seemed to pass from Fernande to Suzanne, as if he were slowly noting the total destruction with which his race was threatened. But was not this idea, after all, an illusion? had not the sentiment in his eyes been simply the solitary look which sometimes displayed itself in a vague smile when he looked at his dear granddaughter, the only person whom he loved, and whom he ever wished to recognize again?

Luc was not long in understanding, as the victoria rolled towards Beauclair, why Delaveau had been so anxious for his company. The latter began at once to question him on his sudden journey, on what he intended to

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do, and on the new management which Jordan intended to use for his blast-furnace, now that Laroche, the old engineer, was dead. One of Delaveau's secret projects had always been to buy the blast-furnace, as well as the wide extent of land which separated La Crêcherie from his factory, and in this way to double the value of the Pit, and to swallow up La Crêcherie. But this would have to be a very gradual measure, and he had hoped to accomplish it by slow degrees, not expecting to have the necessary means in hand for a long time. Still, the sudden death of Laroche had aroused his desire very keenly, and he said to himself that he could perhaps arrange the matter with Jordan, whom he knew to be buried in his studies and desirous of ridding himself of an undertaking which harassed him. This was why the sudden appearance of Luc, at Jordan's bidding, had excited him so strongly; for he had feared that the young man might in some way act counter to his project, which he was not as yet prepared to discuss openly. His first inquiries, made with an appearance of good-fellowship, roused Luc's suspicions, although he did not understand their purport, and he answered in an evasive manner.

"It is six months since I have seen Jordan, and I know nothing of his affairs. . . . His blast-furnace, I think, will go on easily enough under the management of some young engineer of ability."

He observed that while he was speaking Fernande never took her eyes off him. Nise was asleep on her lap, and she sat silent and deeply interested, as though she divined that her fortune hung in the balance, while she kept her gaze fixed on the young man, in whom she had already scented an enemy. Had he not taken Suzanne's part, and had she not seen them show mutual understanding when their hands met in so friendly a manner? She felt as if war was declared, and all her beauty expressed itself in a cold, fine smile, for she felt already sure of victory.

"Oh, I only spoke," said Delaveau, beating a retreat, "because I was told that Jordan was thinking of de-

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voting himself to some researches. . . . He has done some admirable things."

"Admirable!" repeated Luc, with enthusiastic conviction.

The carriage stopped before La Crêcherie, and he alighted, thankful to find himself alone. He shook himself, as if to get rid of an immense dread, which was the outcome of the two days through which his benevolent destiny had led him since his arrival at Beauclair. He had seen the two aspects of that odious world whose structure was giving way from very rottenness: iniquitous poverty upon the one part, the poisonous prosperity upon the other. Labor, badly paid, held in contempt, and unjustly divided, was only a torment and a disgrace, when it ought to have brought honor, health, and happiness to man. His heart burned, his brain expanded under the birth of ideas which he had felt growing in him for months. His whole being was shaken by a need for justice, and he felt that he had now no other mission than to go to the aid of the unfortunate, and to cause justice to be done once more, in some degree, upon the earth.

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IV

THE Jordans were to return to Beauclair the next day, Monday, by an evening train. Luc passed the morning walking in the park at La Crêcherie. This enclosure did not comprise more than fifty acres, but its exceptional situation, sparkling springs, and beautiful turf made it like a corner of paradise, and it was celebrated all through that part of the country.

The dwelling-house was a narrow brick building, without any architectural style, having been built by a grandfather of the present Jordan, in the time of Louis XVIII., on the site of a former château burned down during the Revolution. It stood out against the steep towering slopes of the Monts Bleuses, which just here project so as to form a promontory at the spot where the Brias gorge opens out on to the vast plain of Roumagne. The park, thus sheltered from the north wind, and with a full southern exposure, seemed to be a conservatory of nature where there reigned a perpetual spring. The rocky walls were covered by luxuriant vegetation, thanks to the streams that descended them in every direction in sparkling cascades, while their steep sides were marked with little goat paths winding among the climbing plants and evergreen shrubs. The streams finally united into a slowly moving river, which watered the entire park, with its wide lawns and groups of magnificent trees, all of the strongest and most beautiful description. Jordan was anxious that this natural fertility should not be interfered with by man, and therefore he employed only one gardener and two assistants, who could do no more than keep it in good order in addition to caring for the kitchen gar-

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den and for a few beds of cultivated flowers before the front of the house.

Jordan's father, Aurélian Jordan de Beauvisage, was born in 1790, on the eve of the Reign of Terror. The family of Beauvisage, one of the oldest and most distinguished in that part of the country, was even then on the decline, and of all their immense landed estate there remained to them, at that time, only a couple of farms since joined to the Combettes property, and about twenty-five hundred acres of bare rock and sterile soil, situated in a large tract on the lofty plateau of the Monts Bleuses. Aurélian was only three years old when his parents were forced to emigrate, abandoning their château in flames, one terrible night in winter. Up to 1816 he lived in Austria, where he lost first his mother and then his father, who left him in the most extreme poverty. He was brought up hardly in the school of manual labor, having bread to eat only when he earned it as a working mechanic employed in an iron-mine. He lived in this manner until he was twenty-six years old, and then, under Louis XVIII., he returned to Beauclair to find his ancestral property even more diminished by the loss of the two farms; it was, in fact, reduced to nothing but the actual park, except for the twenty-five hundred acres of rock, which nobody wanted. Misfortune had rendered him exceedingly democratic; he considered himself no longer a Beauvisage, and henceforward signed himself simply Jordan; he married the daughter of a very wealthy farmer of Saint-Cron, whose *dot* enabled him to build on the ashes of the former château the bourgeois brick mansion which his grandson now inhabited. But he had once been a working-man; his hands showed always the marks of toil, and he remembered the iron-mine in Austria, whose blast-furnaces he had once tended. In 1818 he sought for, and found, a similar mine among the desolate rocks of his own domain; he had had reason to suspect its existence, thanks to certain legendary recitals of his parents, and he set up his blast-furnace half-way up the mountain above La Crêcherie, it being the first one built in that part of the

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country. From that time he devoted himself exclusively to industrial pursuits, but without ever realizing very brilliant results; he was always in difficulties, for money was indispensable to the business, and his claim to gratitude from that part of the country lay in his having, by means of his blast-furnace, employed iron-workers who became founders of the present wealthy works, among others Blaise Qurignon, the forgeman who had founded the Pit in 1823.

Aurélian Jordan had only one son, Severin, who was thirty-five when his father died, and it was only after the death of the latter, in 1852, when his place was filled by the son, that the blast-furnace of La Crêcherie became of considerable importance. Severin had married a young lady named Françoise Michon, the daughter of a doctor of Magnolles, who proved herself a woman of sterling character and superior intelligence. She represented the activity, the wisdom, and the wealth of the house. Her husband was greatly beloved by her, and he relied upon her judgment in all things. Under her guidance he drove new galleries in the mine, increased the amount of ore extracted tenfold, and almost completely reconstructed the blast-furnace in order to provide it with all modern improvements. It was a matter of great regret, both to him and to his wife, that they had for a long time no children who could inherit their large fortune. They had been married ten years, and Severin was forty years old, when a son, whom they called Martial, was born to them, and ten years later a daughter, Sœurette. This belated addition to their family was the full completion of their happiness. Madame Jordan was, before all things, admirable as a mother, and she gave life to her son a second time by rescuing him from the jaws of death when it threatened him in the shape of a serious illness, from which he was saved by her devotion. It was from her that he inherited his intelligence and his goodness. Dr. Michon, the grandfather, was a humanitarian, an idealist with a divine charity, and a Saint-Simonian of the first water; he had retired from practice, and lived at La Crêcherie, where

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his daughter built for him the little cottage that Luc now occupied. There he lived until his death, amid his books, and in the full enjoyment of the sun and of the flowers. His son-in-law died soon after him, but up to the death of his daughter, which occurred five years later, La Crêcherie flourished in all the delights of constant prosperity and happiness.

Martial Jordan was thirty years old, and Sœurette twenty, when they were left orphans, and for five years they had lived alone. The former, in spite of his ill-health and his frequent illnesses, which he had survived only through his mother's care and affection, had passed through the Ecole Polytechnique. But on his return to La Crêcherie he gave up all idea of an official position, and, being master of his own destiny, thanks to his large fortune, he devoted himself passionately to scientific research, along the lines then opening to students in the application of electricity. He built an immense laboratory at the side of his own house, set up a powerful motor in a neighboring shed, and then, becoming little by little more absorbed in his work, he ended by devoting himself almost entirely to realizing his idea of the melting of metals in electric furnaces, not only as a matter to be theoretically established, but to be utilized practically in the industrial works. From this time on he shut himself up completely, and lived the life of a hermit, entirely absorbed in his experiments, his great research, which became his very existence, and which afforded him his only motive for living or working. His little sister filled for him the place of his dead mother. Sœurette soon became his faithful guardian, his good angel, who was always on the watch, caring for him, and surrounding him with the gentle affection which was as necessary to him as the air he breathed. She assumed the entire management of their household, where they lived like two good comrades; she stood between him and all material cares; she even served him as secretary and laboratory assistant, noiselessly, gently, and with a tranquil smile. Fortunately the blast-furnace continued to work satisfactorily under the sole

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superintendence of the old engineer, Laroche, who had been there for more than thirty years, being, in fact, a legacy from the founder, Aurélian Jordan, and in this way the present Jordan, buried in his laboratory experiments, could afford to abstract himself completely from the realities around him. He let his trusty subordinate work the blast-furnace according to its accustomed routine, having ceased to occupy himself with possible improvements and advancements; indeed, he considered these things as relative and transitory, and therefore unimportant, since he himself was going to institute a radical change by the melting of iron by electricity, and this would eventually revolutionize all metallic industries. Sœurette was obliged to intervene and settle certain matters herself with Laroche at times when she knew that her brother's brain was occupied with some research and was resolved that it should not be disturbed by outside influences. But the sudden death of Laroche had just thrown this well-regulated state of affairs into such disorder that Jordan, who considered himself to be very rich, and was wholly without money ambition, became very desirous of ridding himself of the blast-furnace altogether. He was aware of Delaveau's wishes in the matter, and he would have entered into negotiations with him had not Sœurette, wiser than himself, persuaded him to consult Luc, in whom she had great confidence, before taking any steps. This was the occasion of the pressing summons that the young man had received, which had brought him so suddenly to Beauclair.

Luc had known the Jordans, both brother and sister, ever since he had met them at the Boisgelins' house in Paris, where they had spent one winter in order that Jordan might carry on certain studies. A strong sympathy had quickly sprung up between them, based in Luc's case upon a lively admiration for the brother, whose scientific genius seemed to him of the highest order, and a deep regard, mingled with esteem, for the sister, who appeared to him as a figure of divine goodness. He himself was then working with the celebrated chemist,

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Bourdin, having undertaken an investigation of iron ores containing an excess of sulphides and phosphides which he hoped to render available for use; and Sœurette, careful as she always was in the conduct of their personal affairs, now recalled certain details in regard to this subject that he had given her brother in the course of an evening's conversation, and which had remained strongly impressed upon her mind. It was now more than ten years since the mine discovered by their grandfather, Aurélian Jordan, on the plateau in the Monts Bleuses, had been abandoned, because some very bad lodes had finally been struck, where sulphur and phosphorus were in such excess that the ore when it came to the melting-pot did not yield enough to pay for the expense of its extraction. The exploitation of the galleries had therefore been stopped, and the blast-furnace of La Crêcherie was now supplied by the mines at Granval, near Brias; the ore from thence, which was excellent, was brought by a little railroad right up to the platform for charging, and the coal was brought in the same way from the neighboring coal-mines. But all this was a great expense, and Sœurette had often thought of those chemical methods mentioned by Luc, which might, perhaps, enable them to resume the working of their own mine; and her desire to consult him before her brother came to a decision was increased by her feeling the necessity of at least knowing what they would really make over to Delaveau if a sale took place between La Crêcherie and the Pit.

The Jordans were expected by the six o'clock train, after twelve full hours' journey, and Luc, availing himself of the carriage sent for them, went to the station to meet them. Jordan, small and delicate, with a gentle, oval face of somewhat dreamy expression, framed by hair and beard of a very light brown, descended from the railway carriage enveloped in an immense cloak, although the September day was warm. His black eyes, in which all the vitality of his being seemed to be concentrated, were very lively and very penetrating, and it was he who first perceived the young man.

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"Ah, my good friend, how kind you are to have waited for us! . . . We had no idea of such a disaster as this poor cousin's death all alone down there, and we were obliged to go to the funeral, although I have a horror of travelling! . . . However, it is over; here we are."

"In good health, nevertheless, and without too much fatigue?" asked Luc.

"Not too much. I was able to sleep, happily."

Sœurette, having assured herself that none of the wraps, which she carried from precaution, had been forgotten, now arrived in her turn. She was not pretty; she also was small and pale, and she had the insignificant look of a woman who had resigned herself to the rôle of manager and sick-nurse. Nevertheless, a tender smile of infinite charm lighted up her quiet face, although it had no beauty but her passionate eyes, in the depths of which burned all the capacity for affection that was pent up within her, of which she herself was in ignorance. She had as yet loved no one but her brother, and she loved him as a cloistered nun loves the God to whom she sacrifices the world. She suddenly exclaimed, even before addressing Luc:

"Martial, pay attention to me. You must put on your muffler."

Then, turning towards the young man, she showed how charming she could be, and displayed all her ready sympathy with him.

"We have so many excuses to make to you, Monsieur Froment. What must you have thought of us when you found that we were not here upon your arrival? At least, I hope you were comfortable at our home—that they showed you every attention."

"Most admirably. I have lived like a prince."

"Ah, you are joking! Before we left I took every care to give all the necessary orders in order that nothing should be wanting to your comfort. Even if I was not on the spot I could care for that, and you will not believe the annoyance I felt at the idea of having abandoned you in such a manner in our poor, empty house."

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They got into the carriage, and the conversation continued. Luc succeeded in reassuring them, swearing to them that he had passed two most interesting days, which pleased them. When they reached La Crêcherie, Jordan looked all around him, in spite of the fact that it was after nightfall, so delighted to resume his habitual existence that he could not repress a cry of pleasure. It seemed to him as if he was returning after an absence of several weeks. How could any one find pleasure in rushing about in different directions, when all human happiness was contained in one narrow corner of the earth, where one thought and where one worked, relieved from the cares of life by the ease of habit? And while Sœurette was giving her attention to the serving of dinner, he hastened to bathe in warm water, and he absolutely insisted on dragging Luc into the laboratory, saying, with his light laugh, that he was burning with desire to return to it himself, and that he could not eat his dinner with an easy mind if he did not breathe first for a moment the air of the apartment in which his life was passed.

"My good friend, it is the most delightful to me of all odors. . . . *Ma foi,* yes, of all odors that which I love best is the odor of the room where I work. . . . It delights me and inspires my ideas."

The laboratory was a wide hall, very high, built of iron and brick, and looking out by large bay-windows on the verdure of the park. The middle of the room was occupied by an immense table covered with apparatus, while the walls were adorned with a complicated equipment, with models, rough draughts of projects and reductions of electrical furnaces in all the corners. A net-work of cables and wires extending from one end of the room to the other conveyed power from the neighboring shed where the motor was set up, and distributed it to the machinery, the apparatus, and the ovens for experimental purposes. In the midst of all these scientific appurtenances, which in themselves were a little rude, a corner in one of the bay-windows was set apart for intimate personal use; it was a pleasant, warm retreat, furnished with low bookcases,

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deep arm-chairs, a divan, where the brother at certain hours was accustomed to doze, and a little table, where the sister sat watching over him and working with him as his faithful secretary.

Jordan touched a button, and the entire room was illuminated with electric light.

"Here I am, then, and decidedly I am only comfortable when I am among my own surroundings. . . . Do you know that the accident which obliged me to leave three days ago happened exactly at the moment when I was conducting an experiment of passionate interest. I shall take it up again at once. . . . *Mon Dieu!* how well I feel when I am here!"

He continued in this laughing manner, looking much better and more animated than usual. He half reclined on the divan in a dreamy attitude which was habitual to him, and obliged Luc to sit down as well.

"Tell me, my good friend—we have plenty of time, have we not, to talk of the things that have made me so anxious to see you that I ventured to send for you? But we must have Sœurette with us, for she is an excellent counsellor; and, therefore, if it is agreeable to you, we will wait until after dinner, and it shall be for our dessert. . . . Ah, how delighted I am to have you here with me in the mean time, and to tell you of my research-work! It does not go on very quickly, but I work steadily, and you know it is a great business, and one may conquer the whole world by working a couple of hours a day."

Then the habitually silent man began to talk, and to describe his experiments, which, as a rule, he confided only to the trees in his own park, as he himself sometimes said in jest. The electrical furnace for the melting of metals had already been devised; the next thing was to make a practical application of it to the melting of iron ore. In Switzerland, where the motor force of the streams is such as to allow of cheap installations, he had seen furnaces which melted aluminum under excellent conditions. Why should one not melt iron in the same way? If one wished to solve this problem, nothing more was needed

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than to apply the same principles to a given case. The present blast-furnaces produce scarcely more than sixteen hundred degrees of heat, while with electrical furnaces it ought to be possible to obtain two thousand degrees, which would cause immediate and complete fusion with perfect regularity. He had thought out without difficulty the kind of furnace which he believed was wanted, a simple cube of bricks, about two yards square on all its sides, of which the interior, the active centre, and the crucible should be of magnesium, that being the most refractory material known. He had also calculated and determined the volume of the electrodes, which were to be two large carbon cylinders, and his first real discovery had been in working out a method of conveying the carbon necessary for deoxidizing the ore in such a manner that the operation of melting would be exceedingly simplified, and leave hardly any scoriæ. But although the furnace was now an accomplished thing—that is to say, had reached the stage of a completed model—he did not yet see how to put it in operation in such a manner that it would act in a practical and constant fashion so as to meet the needs of industrial uses.

"There," said he, pointing to a model in the corner of the laboratory—"there is my electrical furnace. I admit that it requires further improvement, that it is defective in several points, and that there are difficulties in regard to it which I have not yet solved. Nevertheless, such as it is, it has given me some excellent castings, and I estimate that a battery of ten such furnaces, working ten hours a day, would do as much work as three blast-furnaces such as mine, which are going day and night. And this work would be of the easiest description, which a child could control simply by pressing a button. But I must confess that my iron castings have cost me as much as if they were silver ingots. The problem, as it now presents itself, then, is that my furnace is as yet simply a plaything for the laboratory, and it will come into existence for industrial use only when I shall be able to supply it with electricity in abundance at a cost sufficiently low

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to render the fusion of iron ore by these means remunerative."

He then explained that six months previously he had laid aside his furnace, in order to devote himself entirely to the study of the transmission of electrical power. Would it not be an economy to burn coal as soon as it came out of the mine, and then to send the electric power by cables to the distant works where it was needed? This was the very problem which a great many scientific men had been trying to solve for several years, and they all split on the same rock—namely, the actual loss of considerable power.

"The experiments that will solve this problem are yet to be made," said Luc, with an incredulous air. "I myself am very sure that there is no such economy possible."

Jordan smiled with a gentle obstinacy born of that invincible faith which he preserved in all his researches during the months and months that it sometimes cost him to establish the smallest truth.

"No one should ever believe, in the absence of certainty. . . . Already I have good results, and I am sure that some day electric power will be stored up and that it will be distributed by cables without any loss whatever. And if it takes me twenty years, well! I will spend twenty years. It is a very simple matter: one gets up every morning to one's work; one begins over again at whatever one has not proved. What should I occupy myself with if I did not begin over again?"

He said this with an air of such naïve dignity that Luc was seized with a feeling of admiration as though he were in the presence of some heroic action. He looked at this man, so frail, so delicate, with his feeble, uncertain health; he watched him coughing convulsively under his shawls and mufflers in the midst of that immense room crowded with gigantic apparatus; and as his glance fell on the network of wires that animated all this, and which were set in motion every day in order to carry on the labors of this fragile being who went to and fro among it all ab-

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sorbed in his struggle for success, the latter seemed to him like an insect toiling in the dust of the earth. Where did this man find not only the intellectual energy but the physical vigor to undertake and to carry on the most exhaustive labors, which would seem to require the lives of several strong and healthy men? He moved feebly, he breathed with difficulty, and yet he sustained an entire little world with his slender hands, as fragile as those of a sick child.

At this moment Sœurette appeared, crying gayly:

"What is the matter that you do not come to dinner? . . . My dear Martial, if you are not more sensible, I will put the laboratory under lock and key."

Both the dining-room and the salon were small rooms, warm and dainty, as nests always are which are dear to a woman's heart. They looked out over the open country, commanding a wide view of fields and cultivated lands extending as far as the distant borders of Roumagne. At this hour of the night, however, the curtains were drawn, although the evening was mild; and Luc was struck anew with the minute care that the sister lavished on the brother. He was obliged to follow a troublesome *régime,* which allowed only certain articles of food, a particular kind of bread, and even a special kind of water that was slightly warmed for him. He did not eat any more than a bird, and he got up and went to bed with the chickens, who, after all, are very sensible. During the day he was obliged to take short walks and *siestas* between the intervals of labor. To those persons who expressed surprise at the prodigious labor that he accomplished, and who insisted that he must be bent upon self-destruction, by working from morning till night, he answered that he worked scarcely three hours a day, two in the morning and one in the afternoon; and even more, he divided the morning *séance* into two parts by a little recreation, for he was unable to fix his attention on any subject for more than an hour at a time without vertigo. He had never been able to do more than this, and he was successful only by reason of his force of will, his tenacity, and the passion

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for his work, from which sprang all the intellectual energy which had been fostered by the years of repose during which it had been conceived.

Luc found in all this the answer to the question which had often puzzled him—namely, how Jordan, delicate as he was, found strength for his immense labors. He found it, as Luc now saw, in method alone—in the wise and reasonable employment of his resources, slender as they were. He even utilized his own feebleness, making of it a protection against outside distractions. But, above all, he never varied in his end; he bestowed upon his work every moment that he had at his disposal, and he did so without discouragement and without weariness, sustained always by that continued, enduring, effectual faith that removes mountains. No one realizes the amount of work that can be accomplished by two hours only of daily labor, when this time is bestowed on a useful, decisive work, which is never interrupted by idleness or whims. It is the grain of wheat that overfills the sack; it is the drop of water that makes the river overflow its banks. Stone by stone the building is erected; the monument rises to the height of mountains. And it was thus that this frail little man, wrapped up in shawls and forced to drink warm water for fear of taking cold, had achieved immense results; it was by prodigies of method and of personal adaptation, and by consecrating to his work exclusively the rare hours of intellectual health which he saved from physical weakness.

The dinner was very sociable and delightful. All the service of the table was performed by women, Sœurette having found that men-servants were too noisy and bustling for her brother. The coachman and the groom simply gave assistance on certain definite days of unusual labor. And the maid-servants, who were chosen with great care for their pleasant manners and adroit service, were an addition to the peaceful happiness of the warm, secluded dwelling where only intimates were ever received. This evening the dishes prepared for the master's return were very simple; they consisted of a stock soup, a barbillon

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from the Mionne, dressed in butter, a roasted pullet, and a vegetable salad.

"You have really not been bored to death since Saturday?" Sœurette said to Luc when they were all three seated at table in the well-appointed little dining-room.

"No, indeed, I assure you," answered the young man. "Moreover, you will never be able to guess how I have been occupied."

And he began at once to tell of his Saturday evening, of the condition of gloomy revolt in which he had found Beauclair, the bread stolen by Nanet, the arrest of Lange, and of his visit to Bonnaire, the victim of the strike. But moved by some peculiar scruple, which astonished himself later, he passed over his meeting with Josine, whom he did not even mention.

"Poor people," said the young girl, with pity. "This terrible strike has reduced many of them to bread and water, and those are fortunate who still have bread. . . . What can we do? How can we come to their aid? To give charity is only an infinitesimal relief, and you cannot believe how unhappy it has made me, during the last two months, to feel that we, the rich and fortunate, are radically powerless to help."

She was a born humanitarian, and a pupil of her grandfather Michon, the old doctor, who was a Fourieriste and a Saint-Simonian, and who had taken her on his knee when she was little, in order to tell her beautiful stories, which he invented, of the fortunate isles, and of lands where men realized all their dreams of happiness in an eternal spring-time.

"What can we do? What can we do?" she repeated, sadly, with her beautiful eyes, full of tenderness and pity, fixed on Luc. "Something must be done."

Then Luc, overcome by his own emotion, allowed the heartfelt cry to escape him:

"Ah, yes, it is indeed time; some action must be taken."

Jordan, however, shook his head. In his cloistered existence he never occupied himself with social questions.

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He had, indeed, a great contempt for them—most unreasonably, for it is of all things important that men should interest themselves in the methods by which they are governed. But from the lofty heights at which he dwelt all these events seemed daily accidents of the most trivial character, simple obstacles on the highway. From his point of view it was science alone which led humanity in the direction of truth, justice, and final happiness, and to that ideal future condition towards which men move with slow and painful steps. What did anything else matter? Was it not all-sufficient that science should advance? And in her advance each one of her achievements was definite. The victory of life was hers; and whatever might be the catastrophes attending her progress, in her humanity fulfilled its destiny. He was in reality no less kind, no less tender-hearted than his sister, but he deliberately closed his ears to the struggle going on around him, and shut himself up in his laboratory, where he worked, he said, for the happiness of the morrow.

"Action," he remarked, in his turn, "thought is action, and it is the most fruitful form of action in its influence on the world. Do we know which seeds, of all that are planted, will germinate? . . . If all this misery wrings my heart, I do not make myself uneasy on that account, for the harvest must ripen in its own time."

Luc, not wishing to push the matter in his own feverish and troubled state of mind, then described how he had spent Sunday—his invitation to Guerdache, the breakfast at which he had been present, the persons whom he had met, and their sayings and doings. He was perfectly conscious, however, that the brother and sister became indifferent, having no interest in this other world.

"We very rarely see the Boisgelins since they came to Beauclair," explained Jordan, with his easy frankness. "They were very pleasant to us in Paris; but we live here in such seclusion that our intercourse with them has, little by little, almost ceased. In fact, to tell the truth, our habits and our points of view differ too widely. As to Delaveau, he is an active and intelligent man, who is

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entirely occupied by his business as I am by mine. I must admit that the society at Beauclair inspires me with such aversion that I close my door firmly against it; I am quite satisfied to have it despise me and cast me on one side as a dangerous lunatic."

Sœurette began to laugh.

"Martial exaggerates a little," she said. "I receive the Abbé Marle, who is an excellent man, and also the doctor, Novarre, and the head of the institute, Hermeline, both of whom interest me by their conversation. And although it is true that our present relations with the owners of Guerdache are those of simple courtesy, I retain, nevertheless, a sincere friendship for Madame Boisgelin, who is so good and so charming."

Jordan enjoyed teasing her a little sometimes.

"Let us say, then," he remarked, "that it is I who desire to fly from the world, and that if I were not here you would open wide the doors."

"Oh, but of course," she cried, gayly, "the house is conducted as you please. Do you wish that I should give a great ball, where I would entertain the sub-prefect Châtelard, the mayor Gourier, Judge Gaume, Captain Jollivet, and the Mazelles, the Boisgelins, and the Delaveaus? You shall open the ball with Madame Mazelle."

They continued to laugh together, very happy at their return to their own nest and in Luc's company. At last, with the dessert, the great question of moment was broached. The two maids, so swift and so silent in their felt shoes, which made not the slightest sound, had left the room. The quiet dining-room had the infinite charm of personal intimacy, where hearts and brains could freely expand.

"See then, my friend," said Jordan, "I will explain what I hope for from your kind friendship. . . . You will consider the question attentively, and you will tell me plainly what you would do in my place."

He proceeded to discuss the whole affair, and to explain the position in which he now found himself. He would have wished to get rid of the blast-furnace long

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since had not its operation proceeded, so to speak, of itself, in an unvarying manner, regulated by routine. The profits from it had remained sufficiently good, but these were not of importance in his eyes, for he believed himself to be very rich; and, on the other hand, although they might be doubled or tripled, it would be necessary, in order to do this, to renew a part of the *matériel,* to improve the rendering, and, in short, to give himself entirely up to it. This was what he neither would nor could do; all the more because these old-fashioned blast-furnaces which, according to him, were childish and barbarous, no longer interested him, neither could they be of any use in the experiments on electrical furnaces, in which his whole being was absorbed. Therefore, he had let his own go to pieces, and had given it as little attention as possible while waiting the opportunity to abandon it altogether.

"You understand how that is, do you not, my friend? . . . And now, here is my old Laroche dead, all of a sudden, and the entire management, with all its cares, falls on my shoulders. You have no conception of what it would mean to undertake it; a man's entire existence would hardly suffice to do so, if it were done seriously. Now, nothing in the world would induce me to abandon my researches. I have very nearly made up my mind that the best thing for me to do is to sell it, but I am waiting to know your opinion before I do so."

Luc, who thoroughly understood the matter, considered his views very reasonable.

"There can be no doubt," he answered, "that you must not change your work, which is your whole existence. Not only you yourself but the world at large would lose by that. But there may be some other solution possible, if you reflect a little more. . . . And, moreover, in order to sell, there must be a purchaser."

"Oh," replied Jordan, "I have a purchaser ready. For some time past Delaveau has dreamed of annexing the blast-furnace of La Crêcherie to the steel-factories of the Pit. He has sounded me already, and I need only give him the chance."

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Luc gave a sudden start at the name of Delaveau, for he at once perceived why the latter had shown himself so uneasy, and been so pressing in his inquiries. And when his host, having noticed his movement of surprise, asked him if he had anything to say against the director of the Pit, he replied:

"No, no; I believe him to be, as you say, an intelligent and active man."

"For that reason," continued Jordan, "the business would be in expert hands. . . . I am afraid it would be necessary to accept payments in instalments at very long intervals, for money is not forthcoming immediately, as Boisgelin has no more available capital. But that is no matter; I can wait, and the Pit is a sufficient security."

Then stopping short, and looking Luc full in the face, he concluded:

"Finally, then, do you advise me to have done with it, and to negotiate with Delaveau?"

The young man did not answer at once. A sudden uneasiness, an invincible repugnance, took possession of his entire being. Why was this? he asked himself. Why should he feel anger and repulsion, as if, in advising the sale of the blast-furnace to this man, he was committing an evil action for which he would afterwards suffer remorse? He certainly could not find any good reason which justified him in giving his advice to the contrary. At length he answered:

"Certainly, all that you tell me is very judicious, and I can only approve. . . . Still, I say, reflect, reflect a little longer."

Up to this point Sœurette had listened very attentively, without interfering. She had seemed to share Luc's secret uneasiness; and from time to time she had cast a glance in his direction, with an expression betokening anxiety at what he might be going to say.

"It is not the blast-furnace alone," she said, at last; "there is also the mine; there is all that immense extent of rocks which go with it, and which could not, so it seems to me, be separated from it."

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Her brother made a gesture of impatience, caused by his desire to get rid of the whole thing at once.

"Delaveau may take the land also, if he wants it. What do you wish that we should do with it? It is nothing but bare, calcined rock, where even the brambles refuse to grow. Moreover, it is entirely worthless now that the mine can no longer be worked."

"Is it, indeed, so certain that it can no longer be worked?" she insisted. "I remember, Monsieur Froment, that you told us, one evening, how they had succeeded in the East in utilizing ores of very poor quality, thanks to a chemical process. Why have we not yet tried this process ourselves?"

Jordan raised his two hands to heaven, as if in despair.

"Why, why, my darling? . . . Because Laroche was wholly incapable of taking an initiative; because I myself have not had time to concern myself about it; because things went on according to a certain established custom, and they could not go on in any other. . . . Don't you see that my wish to sell is only in order that I may hear the last of it, since it is radically impossible for me to direct the business, and it would certainly make me ill?"

He stood up, and his sister was silenced, seeing him so agitated, and dreading that he might have fever.

"There are times," he continued, "when I long to tell Delaveau that he may take the whole thing, even if he pays me nothing. . . . As for the electric furnace, the solution of the question of which I am so earnestly seeking, I have never wished to put that to use myself in order to make money out of it, for, as soon as I shall have found it, I shall give it to the world for the fortune and happiness of all. . . . Come, the matter will be settled from the moment that our friend pronounces our plan reasonable, and to-morrow we will study the method of transfer, and I will make an end of the business."

Then, as Luc did not respond, being desirous, in his strange reluctance, not to commit himself further, Jordan became still more excited, and proposed to him to come up with him at once and they would ascertain for

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themselves how the blast-furnace had worked during his three days' absence.

"I am not without uneasiness," he said. "Laroche has been dead a week, and I have not yet replaced him. I left my master-founder, Morfain, to direct the work. He is an admirable man, born here, and has grown up in the works. But, all the same, it is a heavy responsibility for a simple workman, which is all he is."

Sœurette, seized with fear, would have interfered, and entreated him:

"Oh, Martial! you have just returned from a journey, and you are tired; you will not go out now, at ten o'clock in the evening?"

Then he became very gentle, and embraced her.

"Be easy, little sister; do not torment yourself. You know very well that I never do more than I can. I assure you that I shall sleep better if my mind is at ease. The night is not cold, and I shall take my fur cloak."

She herself tied a great muffler around his neck, and accompanied him to the bottom of the outside steps in order to assure herself that the evening was really mild. It was in truth delicious; the fields, the trees, and the water seemed sunk in peaceful slumber under a clear, dark sky dotted with stars.

"Monsieur Froment," said Sœurette, "you know that I confide him to you. Do not let him remain out too late."

The two men returned to the rear of the house and ascended the narrow steps cut in the rock, which led them to a steep path, on the side of which stood the blast-furnace, half-way up the gigantic slope of the Monts Bleuses. This path, winding like a labyrinth among the pines and climbing plants, had an exquisite charm. At each turn of it could be seen the black mass of the blast-furnace standing out more and more clearly against the blue sky, with the strange outlines of its mechanical parts grouped around the central furnace.

Jordan ascended first, with light, quick steps, and as he struck the path he stopped before a mass of rock, where the tiny light of a little lamp was shining.

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"Wait," he said, "I am going to make sure that Morfain is not at home."

"Where does he live?" asked Luc, in astonishment.

"Here, in these old caves, out of which he has made a sort of dwelling, and he persists in living in them, with his son and daughter, in spite of all the offers that I have made him of a little house which is much more habitable."

The entire population of the gorge de Brias occupied these caves. Morfain himself remained there from choice, because he had been born there forty years previously, and finding the situation, which was almost beside the blast-furnace, very convenient for the work that was at once his life, his prison, and his empire. Moreover, he had, in course of time, introduced some comforts into his prehistoric dwelling, where he lived like a civilized cave-dweller; the two grottos were divided by a wooden wall, and a real door and glazed windows were placed at the natural openings. Inside there were three rooms—a bedroom where the father and son slept, another bedroom for the daughter, and a third chamber which served as sitting-room, dining-room, kitchen, and work-room. All three apartments were very neat, with stone walls and ceilings, and furnished with solid furniture, shaped with an axe.

The Morfains, as Jordan had said, had been master-founders in La Crêcherie from father to son. The grandfather had been concerned in establishing it, and now, after eighty years of uninterrupted authority, the grandson watched over the tappings, with a pride in his position as great as though it conferred a patent of nobility. His wife had died four years before, leaving a son of sixteen and a daughter of fourteen. The son had been put to work at the blast-furnace immediately afterwards, and the daughter took entire charge of the two men — cooked, swept, and made a good housekeeper. She was now eighteen years old, and the son twenty; the father contemplated the continuance of his race with a tranquil mind, looking forward to bequeathing the care of the blast-furnace to his son, as his own father had transmitted it to him.

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"Ah, you are there, Morfain," said Jordan, when he had pushed open the door, which was fastened only with a latch. "I have come back, and I wanted to have news of you."

In this cave in the rock, which was lighted by a little smoky lamp, the father and son were seated at table, eating their supper before their evening occupations, while the daughter, standing behind them, attended to their wants. The silent room seemed to be completely filled by their enormous shadows, as they sat without speaking, according to their custom.

Morfain made answer in a heavy, slow voice:

"We have had a very bad time, Monsieur Jordan. But I have good hopes that now everything is going on quietly."

He rose as he spoke, and so did his son. As Morfain stood there, between the boy and girl, they seemed like three giants, so tall that their heads almost touched the low ceiling, the stones of which were darkened by smoke. One could almost have imagined that they were three of the inhabitants of a departed era, instead of ordinary working-people whose natures had been completely modified by centuries of labor.

Luc gazed at Morfain himself in astonishment. He was a colossus, resembling the Vulcans of ancient times, the conquerors of iron. He had an enormous head and a wide face, furrowed and reddened by the furnace flames. A heavy forehead, an aquiline nose, and burning eyes were placed between cheeks which seemed to have been devastated by lava. His mouth was swollen and twisted and his skin tanned to a tawny red. His hands were of the color and strength of two tongs of old steel. Luc then turned his eyes on the son, Petit-Da, whose name had been given him because, when he was little, he had been unable to pronounce certain words, and had once come very near putting his little fingers on a pig of iron which was not yet cooled. He was another colossus, almost as gigantic as his father, with the same square face, prominent nose, and flaming eyes, but he

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was less hardened, less reddened by exposure to the flames. He knew how to read, and this had given his features refinement and a more thoughtful expression. Luc then looked at the daughter, a blonde goddess, whose father always called her, tenderly, Ma Bleue, because of her large blue eyes—eyes of a blue so intense, so deep, so vivid, that one seemed to see nothing in her face but this unfathomable heaven of blue. She had the bearing of a divinity, with a magnificent and simple beauty; she was the most beautiful girl in the district, but at the same time the most self-contained and the least civilized. Her lack of civilization, however, did not prevent her reading and dreaming of things far off, such as her father had never seen, and which made her dissatisfied with repressed longing. Luc was greatly impressed by this group of heroic figures; he was conscious that centuries of labor had arrested in them the progress of humanity, yet they manifested that melancholy pride in their own continual toil which is characteristic of those who constitute what might be called the ancient nobility of the destroyer, labor.

Jordan answered with some anxiety:

"A very bad time, Morfain—how is that?"

"Yes, Monsieur Jordan; one of the *tuyères* became choked. For two days I was almost sure that we would have some disaster, and I have not been able to sleep because I was so distressed that such a thing should happen to me during your absence. . . . If you have time, perhaps it would be best to go and see the works. They are just going to tap the furnace."

The two men finished their soup, standing, and swallowing it in great mouthfuls, while the daughter began to clear the table. They were not in the habit of speaking much to each other—a gesture, a look, was sufficient. Yet the father said to Ma Bleue, in his rough voice, which for the moment was softened by affection:

"You can put out the lights without waiting for us; we shall sleep down below."

Morfain and Petit-Da accompanied Jordan, and as Luc

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turned to follow them he saw Ma Bleue standing at the threshold of the cave-dwelling, tall and stately, like a heroine of mediæval romance, with her large azure eyes lost in dreams, gazing afar off into the clear night.

The dark outline of the blast-furnace soon rose up before them. It was of a very old-fashioned construction, low and massive, and not more than fifty feet high. Successive improvements in the shape of new parts had been added to it, until they had ended by forming a sort of little village, by which it was completely surrounded. The casting-pit, of recent construction, with a floor of fine sand, was of light and graceful construction, with iron trusses, and covered with tiles. To its left, under a glazed shed, was the blast-engine—that is to say, the steam-engine for blowing air—while on the right were two groups of lofty cylinders, where the gases of combustion were purified from dust, and those which were used to heat the air delivered by the blast-engine, in order that it might be hot when it entered the blast-furnace, to accelerate melting. There were also reservoirs of water, with a complete system of piping, which conducted a perpetual stream of cold water around the brick walls of the furnace, in order to cool them off, and thereby diminish the destruction occasioned by the excessive heat within. The monster itself, therefore, was almost obscured by its host of assistants—a pile of buildings, a collection of iron-plate reservoirs, and an entanglement of large metallic pipes, the extraordinary *ensemble* of which, especially at night, took on monstrous silhouettes of fantastic aspect. Above could be seen, cut in the very side of the rock, the tramway over which ran cars loaded with the ore or with fuel from the level ground to the mouth of the furnace. The shaft, beneath, erected its black bell, and afterwards, from the belly to the base of the boshes, there was a strong armor of metal that sustained the brick body and served as a support for the water-pipes and the four *tuyères*. Farther down still there was nothing but the crucible where the tap-hole was stopped up with a plug of refractory clay. The whole thing was, as it were, a restless, gigantic animal, of terri-

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fying shape, which devoured stones and yielded molten metal.

There was no noise, no light. This formidable digestion was carried on silently in the darkness. The only sound heard was a gentle pattering, caused by the drops of water that fell continually from the brick sides, while at some little distance the incessant snorting of the blast-engine. The sole light cast upon the scene came from three or four lanterns burning alone and solitary in the thick blackness of night, intensified by the shadows cast by the enormous buildings. All that could be distinguished was pale forms, those of the eight founders of the night shift, who were wandering about while awaiting the hour of tapping. Above, upon the platform of the furnace throat, it was impossible even to see the fillers, who were silently, and in obedience to signals from below, throwing the proper quantities of ore and coal into the furnace. In all this there was no outcry, no blaze, nothing but a dark, silent effort, intense and excessive in its character, by means of which the labor of humanity brought forth, as it has done in all ages, the evils of the future.

Luc by this time had rejoined Jordan, who had been much disturbed by the bad news which he had heard, and broke in upon his friend's dream by pointing out to him with a gesture the whole mass of buildings.

"Look," he said. "Am I not right to wish to get rid of all this, and to replace this gloomy, unwieldy monster by a system of electric furnaces, which would be so well adapted, so simple, so easy to manage? The casting of metals has really changed very little since the day when primitive man made a hole in the earth and melted ore in it by means of blazing tree-branches. The same childish and elementary method still holds its own; our modern blast-furnaces are nothing more than the prehistoric holes, raised on hollow columns and magnified according to increased requirements, and we continue to throw into them, pellmell, both the metal that is to be melted and the fuel which is to accomplish it, and let them burn together. It

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is like the great body of some animal, supplied incessantly with nourishment in the form of coal and iron oxide, which digests these together in a fiery frenzy, and then restores the metal in a state of fusion at one place, while the gas, the dust, and the refuse of all kinds are disposed of at another. And observe that the entire operation of digestion is here represented in the gradual descent of the digested matters, and the final completion of the whole process; moreover, all practical improvements have had for their object the facilitation of this particular end. Thus, formerly, before the introduction of the blast-engine, fusion was slow and more imperfect; then they began to blow cold air; then it was evident that better results would be obtained if the air were hot. Finally the idea was adopted of making use of the blast-furnace itself to heat as air for its own consumption the gas which until then had been burned at the furnace-throat in an outburst of flames. This is why my original blast-furnace has become so complicated with extraneous machinery, such as the blast-engine, the reservoirs for purifying gas, and the cylinders to which the air is carried in order that it may be heated, to say nothing of all the systems of piping that surround it like the meshes of a net. But in spite of all that has been done for its improvement, it remains primitive in spite of its gigantic dimensions, and all that the improvements have accomplished is to make its more delicate function an occasion of continual crises. Ah, you could never imagine the illnesses to which this monster is subject! It is like a little, sickly child, which gives its family, just as this colossus does, mortal uneasiness in regard to its daily digestion. Two separate gangs, each consisting of six fillers above, eight founders at the base, with their respective masters, besides an engineer, are occupied day and night with the food supply of the monster and the results that it returns; and if the smelting is not wholly satisfactory, they are seized with fear of some derangement of its body. This particular one has now been burning five years without the fire within having ceased its labors for a single minute; and it will continue to burn

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another five years before it is necessary to extinguish it for repairs. All the anxiety, all the care which are expended on its regular performance of its functions arise from the incessant danger of its spontaneous extinction, by reason of some disaster in its own vitals, the gravity of which could not be foreseen. And extinction, for it, is death. . . . Ah, my little electrical furnaces, which children will be able to manage, they will never disturb any one's rest, and they will be so well conducted, so active, so tractable!"

Luc could not help laughing, amused by the tender passion which Jordan threw into his scientific researches. Morfain, followed by Petit-Da, had rejoined them, and he pointed out under the dim light of a lantern one of the four *tuyères,* which, at a height of about ten feet, formed an elbow and entered the sides of the colossus.

"There, Monsieur Jordan," he said; "it is that *tuyère* there that was choked, and, unfortunately, it happened after I had gone to bed, so that I did not find it out until the next day. . . . As the air ceased to come, a chill was the result, and a complete block must have taken place, with an accumulation of material resulting in total destruction. Nothing would pass down, and when I was notified, which was only at the moment of tapping, the slag came out in a thick mass, already perfectly black. . . . And you will understand my apprehension, for I remembered our misfortune ten years ago, when it was necessary to demolish one entire corner of the blast-furnace after a similar experience."

Never before had he spoken so much at one time. His voice trembled at the remembrance of the old disaster, for there is no occurrence more to be dreaded in a black furnace than these sudden chills during which the coal becomes extinguished, and the ore hardens into a compact, stony mass. Unless the fire can be started again, the case is hopeless. By degrees everything cools off, and the whole mass finally consolidates with the furnace itself; after which nothing can be done but to demolish that portion, and destroy it as though it were an old turret crumbling into ruins, and henceforward useless.

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"What did you do?" asked Jordan.

Morfain did not answer at once. He had learned to love this monster, whose streams of lava had burned his face for thirty years. This giant was his master, a fire-god whom he adored; he had worshipped at its shrine, and submitted to its tyranny ever since he had come to man's estate, in order that he might earn his daily bread. He could read only with difficulty, he was untouched by the spirit of the times, and he accepted his hard servitude without revolt, feeling an actual pride in his strong arms, his daily warfare with the flames, and his fidelity to this sullen monster, in whose service he labored without ever thinking of such things as strikes. He had gradually come to feel a real passion for his barbarous and terrible god; his faith in him was tempered by a secret tenderness, and he shuddered at the recollection of the dangerous calamity from which the object of his devotion had just been saved by his own extraordinary effort.

"What did I do?" said he, at last. "I began by increasing the coal supplies threefold; then I tried to clear the *tuyère* by means of a manœuvre with the blast-engine that Monsieur Laroche sometimes employed. But the case was too grave; I found it was necessary to dismount the *tuyère,* and tried to dislodge the impediment by means of a poker. Ah, that was very hard work; we used up all our strength. Still, the air did at last come through, and I have been relieved, because in the slag of this morning I found fragments of ore, and therefore I knew the obstacle must be breaking up and working down. The fires have been relighted, and everything is going on again. We shall soon be able to tell where we are now from the tapping."

Then he added, in a low voice, as though exhausted by so long a speech:

"Monsieur Jordan, I believe that if I had not had better news to give you this evening, I should have gone up and thrown myself into the throat of the furnace. . . . I am only a common workman, a master-founder, in whom you have reposed confidence, since you have put me in the

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place of an engineer who was a gentleman. How could I meet you on your return, if I had to tell you that the furnace was dead because I had let the fire go out? . . . No; I would rather die, too! For the last two nights I have not gone to bed at all; I have watched by the furnace, as I remember watching by my poor wife when I lost her. And I can tell you that the soup which you saw me eating this evening is the first thing that I have swallowed for forty-eight hours, because I myself was choked like the furnace. I am not saying this to make excuses; I only wish that you should know how great my joy is at not having betrayed your confidence."

He almost wept, this strong, sturdy man, hardened by the furnace fires, whose limbs were like steel; and Jordan pressed both his hands affectionately, saying:

"My good Morfain, I know you for a courageous, trustworthy man, and if any disaster had occurred, I am well assured that you would have fought it to the end."

Petit-Da, standing erect in the shadow, had listened, without interrupting by word or gesture. He did not move until his father gave orders for the tapping. In the course of the last twenty-four hours there had been five tappings, about five hours apart. The output, which was ordinarily about eighty tons a day, was now reduced to fifty tons, each tapping yielding about ten tons. The preparations for this one were completed in silence; by the feeble light of the lanterns, the channels and moulds were formed in the fine sand of the casting-pit. There was now nothing to be done but to draw off the slag, and nothing was to be seen but the slowly moving shadows of the founders passing back and forth and leisurely urging forward work that the onlooker did not understand; while in the deep silence of the squat god, whose burnt belly uttered not even a murmur, there was all the time heard the meagre flow of the drops of water that fell from its sides.

"Monsieur Jordan," said Morfain, "do you wish to see the slag run off?"

Jordan and Luc followed him for a few steps, and stood

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on the top of a little mound formed of heaped-up débris. The tap-hole had been placed in the right side of the blast-furnace, and the slag was already escaping from it in a fiery stream of sparkling scoriæ, as if the whole crucible of metal in a state of fusion had suddenly been skimmed there. The mass was very thick, and moved slowly until it fell into small iron plate wagons. At first the lava was rose-colored, and then it gradually darkened.

"The color is good, you see, Monsieur Jordan," cried Morfain, rejoiced. "Oh, we are out of trouble now, there can be no doubt. . . . You will see, you will see!"

He led them in front of the blast-furnace, under the casting-pit, among the vague shadows that the lanterns only dimly illuminated. Petit-Da had just driven a tapping-bar into the plug of clay which closed the tap-hole with one blow of his mighty arm; and now the eight men who composed the night shift struck the bar at regular intervals with a sledge in order to drive it in. Their dark faces were barely distinguishable, but the heavy strokes of the sledge were plainly to be heard. Then suddenly there was a flash of blinding light, as if from a narrow opening into a fiery interior. But nothing as yet made its appearance, except a thin thread of burning liquid. Petit-Da was obliged to take another bar, drive it in, and then turn it with a herculean effort in order to enlarge the opening. Then with an outburst the whole flood streamed out in a tumultuous rush, poured its stream of molten metal into the channels in the fine sand, spread itself out on all sides to fill the moulds, and, finally, widening still more, expanded into fiery seas, which scorched the eyes with their light and heat. And from these paths and fields of fire arose an incessant crop of sparks—blue sparks of delicate lightness, and golden flashes of exquisite fineness, a perfect efflorescence of little blue flowers set on stems of gold. Whenever an obstacle in the shape of sand presented itself, the sparks and flashes redoubled and rose in a splendid bouquet to an immense height. Suddenly, like a miraculous sunrise, a brilliant light appeared all around, illuminating the blast-furnace with a glow of

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intense brightness, lighting up the lower part of the casting-pit, with its iron frame-work and rafters, and bringing out its darkest corners. The surrounding blackness disappeared with extraordinary rapidity; all the different buildings and machines attached to the monster, as well as the workmen of the night shift, who up to this moment had seemed like phantoms, now became suddenly real, outlined with incredible sharpness, so that these heroes of labor seemed to enter all at once into glory. But the illumination did not end there; the splendor of this aurora extended to all the vicinity; it dissipated the shadows that hung over the slopes of the Monts Bleuses; its reflection reached even to the sleeping roofs of Beauclair, and was finally lost in the distance on the immense plains of Roumagne.

"That tapping is superb," said Jordan, when he had noted the quality of the molten metal, its color, and its consistency.

Morfain enjoyed a modest triumph.

"Yes, yes, Monsieur Jordan," he said; "it is as good work as we could expect. All the same, I am very much relieved that you came back this evening. You will have no more uneasiness."

Luc watched the whole operation with the greatest interest. The heat from it was intense, and he felt it through all his clothes. Little by little all the moulds were filled, and the fine sand covering the floor of the casting-pit was changed into an incandescent sea. And when the ten tons of metal had been run off, there came forth from the tap-hole a final tempest in the shape of an immense blast of sparks and flames, caused by the blast-engine, which completed the evacuation of the crucible, by a free passage of air that burst forth with an infernal roar. But the molten metal was already cooling off; the blinding white light changed to pink, to red, and then to brown. The sparks had ceased, and the field of azure flowers with their golden stems was now no more. The darkness descended again with rapidity, the shadows once more enveloped the casting-pit and the blast-furnace with

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its adjacent buildings, while the lanterns seemed to relight their feeble rays. Only one indistinct group of workmen could now be distinguished. Petit-Da, assisted by his comrades, closed the tap-hole with a new plug of clay, while the blast-engine for the moment was silent, having just been stopped to permit this work.

"My good Morfain," said Jordan, "you will go to bed now, will you not?"

"Oh no; I am going to stay here another night."

"What! Stay here? This will be your third sleepless night."

"No; there is a camp-bed in the watchman's room, where one can sleep very well. My son and I will relieve each other, and we will make rounds every two hours."

"But that is not necessary, since everything is going on well. . . . Come, Morfain, be reasonable; go back home and sleep in your bed."

"No, no, Monsieur Jordan; let me have my way. . . . There is no more danger, but I prefer to render account to you myself up to to-morrow. It is my own wish."

Jordan and Luc left him there, after having shaken hands with him. Luc carried away with him a touching impression of that tall figure, bending under the past of sad and humble labor, and yet endowed with the nobleness that attends long-continued effort in the service of humanity as it toils towards happiness and repose. He seemed to reproduce the ancient Vulcans, who had mastered fire in the heroic times which Jordan had just alluded to, when the first smelters had reduced ore by burning wood in a hole formed in the earth. On the day when man achieved the victory over fire, and made it his servant, he became master of the world, and the era of civilization began. Morfain, living in his cave in the rocks, with all his efforts and his pride in them, appeared to Luc like the direct descendant of those primitive toilers, whose nature had been reproduced in him by atavism, making him silent and resigned to using his muscles without a murmur, as in the dawn of human organization. In those thousands of years how much sweat had been expended, how much

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strength had been exhausted and used up! Yet nothing was changed; the conquered fire still had its victims and its slaves who labored for it, who spent their lives in keeping it under subjection, while the privileged of the world lived in idleness in healthy and luxurious dwellings. Morfain, with his air of a legend-hero, did not appear to suspect the monstrous iniquity of all this; he was in ignorance of the storms and revolts that raged around him, remaining impassive at his self-destroying post, in which his father and grandfather had died, and where he himself would die, a sacrifice to existing conditions of society, unknown and unappreciated. The figure of Bonnaire then rose before Luc, that other hero of labor, who spent his life in the struggle against oppression and those who were engaged in it, exerting himself to bring about the reign of justice for the happiness of his comrades, even to the extent of sacrificing his own daily bread. Had not suffering humanity already endured enough under these burdens, and was not the hour come for the slave's deliverance, and for him who had been so admirable in his endurance to become the free citizen of a society founded on good feeling, where the just division of labor and of wealth would result in a perpetual peace?

As they descended the steps cut in the rock, Jordan stopped at the hut of a night-watchman to give an order, and then Luc was witness of an incident which completed the disturbance in his soul. Among some loose rocks behind the bushes he distinctly perceived the shadows of two persons whose lips met in a kiss while they stood clasped in each other's arms. He recognized the girl; it was Ma Bleue, tall, fair, and stately, with those blue eyes which seemed to illuminate her entire face. The other figure, he was sure, was that of Achille Gourier, the son of the mayor, that handsome, high-spirited boy whom he had seen at Guerdache, and whose attitude of revolt and contempt for the decaying *bourgeoisie* to whom he belonged had attracted his attention. The latter spent all his holidays in hunting and fishing among the rocky paths, the torrents, and the fir-trees of the Monts Bleuses. He

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had no doubt conceived a passion for this beautiful, untutored girl, whom so many lovers courted in vain; and she, in her turn, must have yielded at the coming of this Prince Charming, who transported her out of the roughness of her desert into a delicious dream of the future. The future, the future! Was it not the future which could be read in Ma Bleue's large eyes when she stood dreaming on the threshold of her home, with her gaze lost in the distance? Her father and brother were keeping watch up above, while she had made her escape to those rocky solitudes, and the future was for her this splendid, lover-like boy, this *bourgeoise's* son, who spoke to her with deference, as though she were a lady, and swore to love her always. Luc's first feeling was that of heart-sickness at the idea of her father's grief were he to learn of this adventure. Then this unauthorized affection, which, after all, was so sweet, conveyed to him a feeling of tenderness, a caressing whisper of hope; was not this an earnest of a more happy future in store for these children of all classes who, playing together, embracing each other, would at length create the righteous city of the future?

When Luc took leave of Jordan in the park, they had a little further conversation.

"You have not caught cold, I trust. Your sister would never forgive me."

"No, no; I feel perfectly well. . . . And I shall go to rest satisfied, for my resolution is formally taken. I am going to get rid of a business which does not interest me, and which is a continual source of annoyance to me."

Luc felt a sudden return of the sense of uneasiness which he had had before, as if this decision disturbed him, and he was silent for a moment. But as he quitted his friend, he said, with a last clasp of the hand:

"Wait; let me have a day to consider the subject; tomorrow evening we will have another talk, and then you shall decide."

Luc did not go to sleep immediately. He was lodged in the cottage formerly built for Jordan's maternal grand-

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father, Dr. Michon; he occupied the large room where the latter had lived during the last days of his life in the midst of his books; and during the three days he had been there he had been delighted with its atmosphere of industry, of kindness, and of profound peace. But this evening the fever of uncertainty which oppressed him made him feel stifled when he re-entered it; he opened one of the windows wide and leaned out of it, in order to calm himself a little before going to bed. The window looked out on the road which led from La Crêcherie to Beauclair; opposite was an extent of uncultivated fields strewn with rocks; and down below the confused mass of roofs belonging to the sleeping village could be distinguished.

For several minutes Luc breathed in deep draughts of the rushing air that swept across the boundless fields of Roumagne. The night was warm and soft; the clear blue sky was studded with stars, lightly veiled at times with clouds. For a while he heard, without distinguishing, the heavy rhythmical strokes of the hammers at the Pit, that cyclopean forge, where day and night steel was turned out. He raised his eyes and looked for the blast-furnace of La Crêcherie, silent and dark, lost in the inky line made by the promontory of the Monts Bleuses against the sky. He lowered his gaze, and it fell on the crowded roofs of the town, which in its heavy sleep seemed lulled to rest by the measured cadence of the hammers, resembling from a distance the oppressed breathing of some laboring giant, some mournful Prometheus chained to the rock of eternal toil. His discomfort increased, his feverish restlessness refused to be calmed; the people and the events of the last three days passed in review before his memory, defiling in a tragic procession on which he tried in vain to use his reason, tormenting him with the problem that had little by little grown to occupy his mind, and which promised to deprive him of rest until he should have found its solution.

He now thought that he perceived, below the window, among the bushes on the other side of the road, another sound, so light, so gentle, that he could not define what it

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was. Was it the fluttering of a bird's wings, or the rustling of an insect among the leaves? He gazed around, but he saw nothing except the depths of shadow. He thought that he must have been mistaken. Then the sound made itself heard again, nearer at hand. Very much interested, and seized by a singular emotion, which surprised himself, he struggled to pierce the darkness, and at length he perceived the vague outline of a thin and shadowy form, which seemed to hover above the grass. He did not understand the nature of it, and he was beginning to think it an illusion, when a woman crossed the road with a step as light as a chamois and threw him a little bouquet, so adroitly that it fell right upon his face, as though it were a caress. It was a little nosegay of mountain-pinks, freshly gathered from among the rocks, and so fragrant that their odor filled the room.

Josine! He divined that it must have been Josine, and he recognized in this touching act of devotion a renewed expression of gratitude. An exquisite charm pervaded this action, coming as it did out of the darkness at this late hour; he was unable to account for her presence, or for her knowledge of his return, nor did he understand in what manner she had been able to make her escape and come so far, unless Ragu were, perhaps, on night duty. Already she was gone without a word; her only object had been to bestow her flowers, and when this had been so adroitly accomplished, she buried herself in the shadows that enveloped the dark fields around. Just at that moment Luc observed another very little figure, which must surely be that of Nanet, who was running at her side. They both disappeared from sight; he heard nothing now but the rhythmical movement of the hammers at the Pit. His distress of mind was not ended, but his heart was eased of a mighty load. He pressed his face to the little nosegay with delight. Ah, it is kindness that makes the tie of brotherhood, tenderness alone that creates happiness, and love itself that must save and regenerate the world!

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LUC went to bed, put out his light, and hoped that the extreme fatigue of his body and mind would give him a good night's rest, by which he might recover himself. But in the darkness and the silence of that quiet chamber he could not close his eyes; they seemed to open wider in the gloom; he was the victim of insomnia, which made him feverishly hot, and a prey to absorbing thoughts that he could not get rid of.

A vision of Josine kept rising up before him, with her child's face so full of piteous charm. He saw her in tears; he saw her famished, terrorized, waiting near the door of the Pit; he saw her again in the *cabaret,* turned out-of-doors by Ragu, with such cruel violence that the blood gushed from her mutilated hand; again he saw her on that bench by the Mionne, left alone there on that stormy night, having no better prospect than to fall into the stream; and then, again, appeasing her hunger like some poor animal that has lost its home. And, finally, after three days of unexpected, unintentional examination, which he had been led to make through no will of his own, but led by the hand of Destiny, all that he had seen of labor, unjustly distributed and socially despised, seemed to culminate in the unhappy fate of this poor girl who had moved his heart so deeply.

Then a crowd of visions presented themselves and tortured him by their persistency. He again felt terror floating in the air in the dim streets of Beauclair, in the heavy footfalls of that miserable crowd, shut out from all the blessings nature had intended to provide for them, dreaming darkly of how they might be avenged. In the household of the Bonnaires he had seen revolution rea-

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soned out and organized, while privation that pinched their stomachs stared the family in the face, in their cold, bare abode in which everything that ought to make a home was wanting. At Guerdache he had witnessed all the insolence of corrupt luxury, and the poisonous self-indulgence that was putting the finishing stroke to the ruin of the privileged classes in a little circle of middle-class rich people gorged with the wealth that they had stolen from the labor and the sorrow of an immense number of working people. Even in La Crêcherie, that blast-furnace that stood there in a sort of wild nobleness, where not one workman had reason to complain, persistent human toil seemed to have been stricken with anathema; it was helpless sadness forever, without hope of future enfranchisement for the human race, given over to slavery, denied entrance into the city of justice and peace. He had seen, he had heard Beauclair cracking to pieces, for the ferment of destruction was not alone between classes; a tempest of folly and of hatred had burst even upon families. Horrible scenes were enacted in men's homes, and drove in the gutters fathers, mothers, and children. They lied, they stole, they murdered. The next step after poverty and hunger was crime—women sold their purity, men took to alcohol, like beasts enraged that roared because they wanted to satisfy their bodily instincts. Too many signs announced that an inevitable catastrophe was drawing near, that the old building was about to cave in and drop to pieces in blood and ruin.

Then, frightened by such visions of punishment and shame, and distressed by reason of the human tenderness that was in his heart, Luc saw another vision rise out of the darkness. He saw the pale phantom of Josine, with her soft laugh. She held out her arms to him in touching appeal. He saw nothing but her. She was about to be crushed by the fall of a decayed, worm-eaten edifice. It seemed to him as if she were the only victim — little, frail workwoman as she was, with her wounded hand, dying of hunger, a creature whom prostitution would drag into its filth. She seemed the incarnation of the misery

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of the wage-earners, a pitiable little figure whose charm had moved his heart. He was suffering from what he thought that she must suffer; and he wanted to save her while he formed a wild dream of saving Beauclair. If any supernatural being had given him all power, he could, he thought, have made that place, now putrid with selfishness, a happy city of brotherhood. And then he felt that this dream was not of himself, but that it had been sent to him from afar. He had had it ever since he lived in Paris, in a poor quarter of that great city, among the mute, inglorious heroes of labor and its melancholy victims. He felt a sort of presentiment of a future that he could not precisely understand, a mission to be given him. Then suddenly, in the confusion of his senses, it seemed to him as if the moment for action had arrived. Josine was dying of hunger, Josine was sobbing. He must not let this go on—he must act. He must at once go to the rescue of so much misery and so much suffering. He must put a stop to such iniquities.

At last, overcome by fatigue, Luc fell asleep. But very soon he fancied himself called; he started up. Did he not hear sad voices in the distance? Were not poor wretches in danger of death imploring him for help? Sitting up in bed, he listened, but heard nothing in the darkness but a faint noise. His heart had been stirred, however. He was moved by the certainty that at that very moment millions of poor creatures were crushed and suffering under the iniquity of the present social system. Then, shuddering, he fell back on his pillow and went to sleep again, but even then he heard the same cries for help. Again he raised his head and listened. Half awake as he was, his sensations became extraordinarily acute; and he could not go to sleep for a moment without hearing the appeals for his help grow more importunate. It seemed as if they were called forth by some pressing need. He felt he must give his help at once, but he could not clearly perceive in what direction. Which way must he run to get most quickly to the spot where he was needed? What must he do to prepare the way for vic-

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tory? He did not know. He suffered cruelly from the vague nightmare which had taken possession of his senses. It was as if something in the utter darkness gave promise of too late a dawn, as if he was continually implored to take part in a work which he could not clearly discern, though from time to time he seemed just about to discover it. And distinctly among all the voices that called on him for help he heard that of Josine, imploring and lamenting. She only was there; he felt the warmth of the kiss she had pressed upon his hand; he inhaled the scent of the little bunch of pinks that she had thrown him, whose perfume seemed to pervade his chamber.

From the moment he felt this Luc ceased to struggle for sleep. He shook off his feverish wakefulness, and was at peace. He relighted his candle, rose, and for a few minutes walked about his chamber. He tried to think of nothing, hoping to get rid of the ideas that had troubled his brain. He tried to interest himself in something else; he examined some old engravings hanging on the walls, the old furniture which told him of the habits of Dr. Michon, of his kindliness and love of study; the whole venerable room spoke much of his benevolence, much of his good sense and of his wisdom. At last the books claimed his attention. In a large bookcase with glass doors the old Saint-Simonian—the old Fourierite—had made a complete collection of the works on humanitarianism which had so greatly interested him in his youth. All the social philosophers, all the precursors and apostles of the New Evangel were there represented: Saint-Simon, Fourier, Auguste Comte, Proudhon, Cabet, Pierre Leroux, and more besides—it was a complete collection, including the writings of Fourier's most obscure disciples. And Luc, holding his candle, grew interested as he read the names and title-pages of the different volumes, and counted them, astonished at their number—astonished that so many men had scattered seeds that had not fructified, that so many good words lay buried there waiting for the future harvest.

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He had read much already on the subject; he knew the more important pages of the larger part of these works. The philosophical, economical, and social system of each of these authors was well known to him. But he felt as if a new breath of air had come to him, when he found them all thus standing together in a compact group. He never before had had so clear an appreciation of their power, of their value, of the greatness of the human evolution they were written to produce in the world. They stood there in a phalanx, the advance guard of a future century, which, by degrees, would be followed by an immense army from all nations. Above all, what struck him most as he saw them standing thus peaceably side by side, with mighty strength lying latent in their union, was their fraternity. Though he was not ignorant of the contradictory ideas which once had severed them, nor of the fierce fights they had often had with one another, they now seemed to him like brothers, reconciled by belief in one common gospel, in the sure and only truths that each one had contributed; and the great day-dawn from their works was the religion of humanity, in which they had all had faith; their tenderness for those on earth who had lost their inheritance; their hatred of social injustice; their belief in the labor which was to save them.

Luc, having opened the bookcase, thought he would take out one of these books. Since he could not sleep, he would read a few pages, and then sleep might come to him. For one moment he hesitated, then he selected a very small volume, in which a disciple of Fourier had summed up the whole teaching of his master. The title, *Solidarité,* had attracted him, for was not that just what he needed; a few pages of hope and strength was what he wanted. He went back to bed and began to read; he was soon as much excited as if he had been witnessing a drama on which the fate of the human race hung. The doctrines of Fourier, being there abridged, were presented only as the essence of the truths they formulated, and so treated they had an extraordinary force. He knew all these things before—he had even read them in the pages

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of the master, but never before had they so moved him, so entirely conquered him. In what state of mind could he be, at what important hour of his life had he arrived, that his heart and his brain should be thus possessed—should thus have acquired a clear vision in an instant of time? The little book became more animated; everything took a new meaning when applied to things in the present, as if living facts rose up and were impersonated.

And the whole system of Fourier unfolded itself before him. His genius was shown in utilizing men's instincts as if they were living forces. The long disastrous error of Catholicism was that it had tried to subdue and to abase them, that it had tried to destroy the man within the man, to make him the slave of a God whose true nature was unknown to him. Instincts, in the emancipated communities of the future, were to be productive of as much good as they formerly had done harm in society, enslaved and terrorized in past ages. They were immortal aspirations—the only lever that can lift up worlds, the inner fires of strength and will which give power to act to every human being. Deprived of any of his passions, a man would be mutilated as if one of his senses had been taken away from him. Instincts hitherto smothered and crushed, as if they were evil things, would, when free, become motive power of that universal attraction which tends to unity, endeavoring, amid many obstacles, to blend into final harmony the expression of universal happiness. There would be no more men then who were selfish or lazy; all would be eager for harmony and unity; all would be as brothers on the day when they should see their road so clear and wide before them that they might walk on it with ease and happiness. Then would be set free the victims of the heavy serfage now weighing upon manual labor; they would be relieved from unjust, unnatural, ill-apportioned toil; they would work joyfully, since they would have their proper part and share in the common labor of the world.

And again, with another stroke of genius, labor having once more been made honorable, would have its public functions, and become the pride, the health, the gayety—

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nay, even the law, of life. If labor were reorganized, all society would be reorganized too; for work ought to be made a civic obligation, the rule of life. But this would be another kind of labor, unlike that brutally imposed on human victims, on ignoble mercenaries, who could be crushed at their masters' pleasure, and treated like hungry beasts of burden; it would be work freely accepted by all men, divided according to natural tastes and capacities, employing the laborer only for the few hours that were indispensable—labor varied according to the free choice of voluntary workers. A town or a commune would be like an immense hive, in which there would be no drones, where each citizen should bear his part in the work common to all—work that the city would need that all might live. The tendency to unity, to complete harmony, would draw men to one another, would form them into groups, would make them classify themselves. All the mechanism of society would be preserved, and all work be infinitely divided, each workman choosing the task he could most pleasantly perform; workers would cease to be nailed down to one employment, but each would pass when he pleased from one to another. The world could not be thus revolutionized at once; things would have to begin in a small way—making an experiment of the system on one commune with a few thousand souls, to show what could be done by a living example; then the dream would become a reality; the phalanx would have been created; there would be a military base for the great human army; they would build the phalanstery (the town-hall which was to be the centre of the system—the house common to all). At the beginning, in order to get out of the present difficulties of the situation, it would be necessary simply to call for volunteers, those who felt themselves to be suffering from painful injustice. They could then be associated; and thus could be formed a great union of capital, talent, and labor. Those who had money, those who had hands, those who had brains, could be called upon to unite, and put their all into the common fund. They would produce a hundredfold what they now do by their

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united energy; they would bring in returns which they would divide equitably, until the day when money, toil, and talent should become the common patrimony of a free brotherhood in which everything should belong to all, and harmony should be realized.

And on each page sparkled the splendor of that word *Solidarité*—"Association"—which was the title of the little volume. Its phrases shone like lamps in a lighthouse. Man's reason was infallible; truth was absolute; a truth once demonstrated by science to be truth was irrevocable and eternal. Labor ought to be pleasure. The happiness of each would one day consist in the happiness of others. There would be no more envy, no more hatred, when there should be space in the world for the happiness of all. The wheels of the social machine, as they were at present, must be done away with, for they were useless—they consumed force; and trade would also have to be condemned; the consumer would have to buy from the producer. With one blow all parasites would be swept away. The innumerable unwholesome growths which live on social corruption, or on the state of warfare in which men, as things are now, live a living death, would disappear. There would be no more armies, no more law courts, no more prisons. And, above all things, when that great dawn shall have taken place, righteousness would shine like the sun, dispersing poverty, giving to every creature who is born the right to live, bestowing upon each his daily bread, and the perfect happiness which is his birthright.

Luc read no more; he began to think. All the great, heroic nineteenth century passed before him. It seemed like a great battle, with its efforts at once so brave, so sad—a vain struggle to insure truth and justice. From one thing to another the irresistible democratic movement, he foresaw, would advance; the idea of the elevation of the people inspired him. The Revolution had merely brought the *bourgeoisie* into power; it would need another century to finish its work, and to enable all classes to take part in it. The seeds had been germinating in the soil

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of the old monarchy, through which free winds continually blew, and after the days of '48 the question of labor and wages came into prominence; the claims of the toilers were more and more insisted on. They shook the new *bourgeois régime* which was in power—a power which owed its origin to tyranny and corruption. And now, on the verge of another century, as soon as united effort on the part of the working-classes should knock down the old social structure, the reorganization of labor would become the foundation of the future social system, which could only be brought about by a just distribution of wealth and property. All, at the next stage which the world was approaching, was ready, and waiting for this revolution. When the old world passed from slavery to paid labor—that violent crisis, which destroyed whole empires, was nothing to the present crisis which has been going on for a hundred years, shaking and unsettling all nations—the crisis of the remuneration of labor which has passed through different stages in its gradual evolution, becoming first one thing, then another. And it was this other phase of the problem which was to give birth to the happy brotherly city of to-morrow.

Softly Luc laid down the little volume and blew out the candle. He had read, and he felt calm; peaceful sleep—the sweet restorer—was stealing over him. It was not that clear answers had been given to the pressing questions that embarrassed him, or to the cries of anguish which, coming out of the darkness, had so moved him. But he no longer heard these piteous appeals, as if those who had been deprived of their rights were now sure that their cries had been heard and were content to endure longer with patience. The seed was sown; the harvest would come at length. The little book had done its work; it had fallen into the hands of an apostle and a hero; its mission would be accomplished when the hour arrived which had been fixed for it by the progress of evolution. And Luc no longer had fever in his veins; he no longer asked himself unanswerable questions, although the solution of the problem which had so much

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interested and excited him was put off for a time. He felt himself pregnant with an idea, and had the absolute certainty that it would in due time be born. It might be on the next day, if his sleep were sound. And he ended by yielding to his great need of rest. He slept deliciously, never moving in his sleep, watched over by his good genius, which gave him faith and will.

The next morning at seven o'clock, when Luc awoke, his first thought, when he saw the sun rising in a clear blue sky, was to get out of the house without telling the family of Monsieur Jordan, and climb the rocky cliff to the blast-furnace. He wanted to have another talk with Morfain, and get him to give him further information. He was led by a sort of sudden inspiration. He was especially anxious to be able to form a clear opinion on the subject of the old abandoned mine, and said to himself that the master-founder, a man born in those mountains, must know every stone in them. Morfain had always had an idea of his own on the subject, and, though nobody would listen to him, he often spoke about it. He thought that old Laroche, the engineer, should not have given up immediately and have ceased to work the mine as soon as he found it becoming unremunerative. No doubt the vein had become execrable, so full of sulphur and of phosphate that it was no good whatever for smelting purposes. But Morfain was convinced that they were only working a bad vein, and that if they pushed their galleries a little farther—or, better still, were to open new ones on one side of the gorge in a place he could point out—they would be able to find just as good ore as they had found formerly. And he supported his opinion by his own observation, and by his familiarity with all the rocks in that neighborhood which he had climbed and walked over for forty years. Of course he had no scientific knowledge; he was only a poor workman who could not venture to offer an opinion contrary to that of the gentlemen who were engineers. But all the same, he had been surprised to find they put so little confidence in his instinct, and shrugged their shoulders at him, without even

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trying to verify what he told them by a few attempts to examine whether what he said had any foundation.

The quiet conviction of this man had strongly impressed Luc, the more so because he was far from pleased with the inertia of old Laroche, and the way in which he had given up the mine after the chemical discovery which might have enabled him to make profitable use of the defective ore. This showed him into what a drowsy routine the work of the upper furnace had fallen. Now he was resolved to urge the reopening of the mine, even if he had to treat its products by the chemical process lately discovered to utilize defective ores. And then, if what Morfain felt so sure of could be realized, if they came upon rich new veins that were of pure ore! . . . So he accepted the proposal of the master-founder to go at once and walk round the abandoned galleries and let him explain his ideas upon the spot. On this fresh, clear morning in September it would be a delightful walk among the rocks, in that wild solitude, all perfumed with lavender. For three hours along the sides of the gorge the two men climbed. They went into grottos, followed ridges covered with pine-trees, where rocks were sticking out of the soil, like the bones of some great skeleton buried beneath. And by degrees Morfain's conviction became that of Luc. He began to feel at least a hope that he had come upon a treasure that other men's want of enterprise had overlooked, which the earth — that inexhaustible mother—was ready to bestow upon her children.

It was past noon. Luc accepted a breakfast of milk and eggs up in the Monts Bleuses; and when he came down, about two o'clock, delighted with what he had seen, his lungs filled with the pure air of the mountains, he was received with greetings from the Jordan family, who had been anxiously wondering what had become of him. He apologized for not having forewarned them. He said that he had been wandering about upon the mountains and had breakfasted with some peasants. He permitted himself to be guilty of this little deception because some strangers were at table with the family. Every other Tues-

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day of the month the Jordans always had three guests—the Abbé Merle, Dr. Novarre, and Hermeline, the school-master; Sœurette liked to see these men around her; she used laughingly to call them her privy council, because all three helped her in her works of charity. La Crêcherie, so shut into itself, where Jordan lived the life of a learned recluse, as much as if he had been in a cloister, was always open to these three men, who were treated as intimate friends, and it might have been said that they owed this favor to their good understanding with one another, though all three were continually engaged in arguments and discussions; but their discussions only amused Sœurette and made them dearer to her, for she could see that they interested Jordan, who listened to them with quiet amusement.

"Then you have had breakfast?" she said to Luc. "But that is no reason why you should not take a cup of coffee with us—is it?"

"All right as to the cup of coffee," he answered, gayly. "You are too kind. I deserve nothing but the most bitter reproaches."

With that they went into the salon. Its windows were open; the park displayed its velvet lawns; all the charm of the great trees seemed concentrated in a delicious odor. In a porcelain vase, on a little table, was a beautiful bouquet of roses, roses that Dr. Novarre took the greatest delight in cultivating, and a bunch of which he brought to Sœurette every time he breakfasted at La Crêcherie.

While coffee was being served, an argument was resumed between the priest and the school-master.

"If you get nothing out of your pupils," said the Abbé Merle, "it is because you have banished God from your school-room. God is the master of intelligence. We can know nothing but through him."

Very tall, very stout, with his aquiline nose and large, broad face, and with regular features, he spoke with the absolute authority of his narrow views, for he put the whole salvation of the world in its acceptance of Catholicism, to be practised according to the letter, and in strict

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conformity with ecclesiastical rules. And opposite to him sat Hermeline, the school-master, with a sharp, thin face, a bony forehead, and a pointed chin, just as opinionated as his opponent, just as authoritative, and just as much a formalist; his religion was the religion of progress and of invention, to be carried on by military means, by shells and rifles.

"Don't talk to me of your God, who has led men to nothing but error and ruin! . . . If I get no results out of my pupils, it is, in the first place, because they are taken away from me too soon, and are put into the factory; and, in the second place, because discipline is more and more relaxed, so that the master has lost nearly all his authority. On my word! if I were allowed to give them a few thrashings it is my belief it would stir up their brains."

And as Sœurette cried out at this, he explained. He thought that there was but one means of safety in the midst of general corruption, and that was to make children bend to discipline in a system of liberty, to make them true republicans, by force if necessary, so that they might never be anything else. His dream was to make every school-boy a servant of the State, to make him sacrifice to the State his whole individuality. He saw nothing better than one lesson to be learned by all in the same way, and to the same end—namely, to serve the community. Such was his hard, sad religion of a democracy set free from the past, kept in order by fear of punishment, condemned once more to forced labor, and its happiness dependent on the ferule of a master.

"Apart from Catholicism men wander in darkness," repeated the Abbé, persistently.

"Oh! that's too much!" cried Hermeline. "Admit that, and we should have to build our social system over again."

Of course, the priest was well aware of the great fight that was taking place between Catholicism and science, the victory of the latter becoming more complete year by year. But he would not recognize it, nor would he admit that his church was becoming more empty day by day.

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"Catholicism!" he replied: "its structure is so solid, so eternal, so divine, that you are yourselves trying to copy it when you are endeavoring to construct your kind of an atheistic State in which God is to be replaced by some kind of a machine intended to instruct men and govern the world."

"A machine! And why not?" cried Hermeline, exasperated by what he felt to be truth in the priest's attack. "Rome has never been anything but a great press which has squeezed all the blood out of the world."

When this discussion threatened to become violent, Dr. Novarre interposed, saying, with his conciliatory, smiling air:

"Come, come; don't excite yourselves. You were just about to come to an agreement, since you were both accusing each other of copying the other's religion."

The doctor, short and slim, with a delicate nose and bright, eager eyes, was a tolerant man, very kindly, but a little ironical, who, having given himself heart and soul to science, did not choose to let himself be too much excited over social and political questions. He said, like his great friend, Jordan, that he never espoused any truth until it had been scientifically demonstrated. Very modest, somewhat timid, and without ambition, he was only desirous to take the best possible care of his patients. He had no especial passion except for the cultivation of roses, in his little walled garden, where he lived by himself in peace and happiness.

Up to this point Luc had been satisfied to listen. Then what he had read during the night came back to him, and he began to speak.

"The most terrible thing in our schools," he said, "is that they start on the idea that man is vile, that he begins life naturally inclined to insubordination and to idleness, and that nothing but a system of rewards and punishments will bring good out of him. In this way the acquisition of knowledge has been made a torture; our brains have been worked as mercilessly over books as manual labor has overtaxed the workman. Our professors have been

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changed into such men as in old days stood over the galley-slaves with scourges; their mission is to cramp the intelligence of our children by running them all into the same mould, with no regard to their different individualities. They thus become murderers of originality; they crush out the spirit of criticism, of private judgment; they hinder any awakening of personal talent; they smother it under a mass of ready-made ideas of officially accepted truths. And the worst part of the system is that the character of the pupil suffers as much as his intelligence, and that this kind of instruction will turn out incapables and hypocrites."

Hermeline felt himself personally attacked. He broke in by saying, sharply:

"But how would you like us to proceed, monsieur? Come and take possession of my place, and you will soon see how many pupils you will get if you do not bring them under the same discipline, and make them look on you as one who to them is the incarnation of authority."

"The school-master," said Luc, dreamily, "should have no task before him except to awaken the energies of his scholars. He is a professor to teach them individual energy; his mission is only to discover a child's aptitude, by asking him questions and by developing his personality. Men have an insatiable desire to learn and to know, which ought to be the only spur to study, not punishments or rewards; and it is evident that we ought to facilitate for every one the study he is most inclined to. It should be made attractive to him; he should be induced to engage in it and to go on with it by the force of his own comprehension, and with the pleasure that may arise from continual discoveries. To make men by training them to be men—is not that the problem of instruction? Will not the question of education be thus solved?"

The Abbé Merle, who was finishing his cup of coffee, shrugged his broad shoulders, and said with priestly dogmatism:

"Man is sinful; he can be saved only by penitence. Idleness, one of the capital sins, can only be cast out by

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labor. Labor was the punishment God inflicted on the first man after the Fall."

"But that is a mistake, abbé," said Dr. Novarre, very quietly. "Laziness is a malady when it is real laziness—I mean when the body refuses to work, or cannot bear the least fatigue. You may be sure, then, that this invincible inertia is the sign of great internal troubles. What other cases have you ever seen of positive idleness? There is no such thing as men idle by race, by habit, or by preference. Is a society woman who dances all night idle? Does she not wear out her eyes, does she not expend her muscular strength far more than a seamstress who sits nailed to her little table doing embroidery all day long? Your men of pleasure who are always attending parties and balls, don't they work as hard as laborers at their work-bench? And then remember how, when we have finished some distasteful task, with what pleasure we fling ourselves into recreation—violent recreation it may be, which strains all our muscles. This shows that work—or physical fatigue—is not repugnant to human beings, unless they do not like the kind of labor. And if men could have only such work as they like imposed on them, there would never be any man who was lazy."

Here Hermeline shrugged his shoulders.

"Ask a child which he likes best—grammar or arithmetic. He will tell you that he does not like either. We know by experience that a child is like a young tree that must be trained and pruned."

"And he can only be corrected," said the priest, for once agreeing with the school-master, "by crushing out all that original sin has planted within him—all that is ignoble and devilish."

There was silence. Sœurette had been listening attentively to the discussion, while Jordan, with his eyes fixed on something out of the window, sat dreamily looking at the great trees. And Luc realized that this pessimistic conception of Catholicism had been adopted by the apostles of progress, who had founded their ideas of the State on a basis of authority. Both held man to be worthy

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of damnation — lost by the Fall, then redeemed, and ready to be lost once more. A jealous God, an angry God, seemed always to treat man like a disobedient child. All his passions, bad or good, for ages it had been thought proper to suppress. Men had endeavored to kill the man within the man. Fourier again came into Luc's mind, with what he said of vehement inclinations utilized, ennobled, and brought back to be necessary creative energies; of man set free from being crushed by unreal religions, which are a species of social police to maintain the usurpation of the rich and the powerful—all came back to him.

Then, in his reverie, Luc said to himself, as if he were speaking aloud:

"It would suffice if we could convince all men of the truth—that the greatest happiness of each is in the greatest happiness of the greatest number."

But Hermeline and the abbé began to laugh.

"That would be a grand thing, indeed," said the schoolmaster, ironically. "To awaken a man's energies, you would begin by destroying all rewards. Tell me, should men work to benefit others and not themselves, what lever would you have to stimulate them to action? Personal interest is the fire under the pot; you may see it in the inception of everything. And you would annihilate it, you would begin by depriving man of his instinct of self-preservation, you, who stand up for his instincts. . . . I suppose you count upon his conscience, on his notions of honor and of duty?"

"I do not need to count upon them," said Luc, very quietly. "Love of self, as we have hitherto understood it, has given us a horrible society, so full of hatreds and of sufferings that we may well think we have a right to try some other motive power. But, I repeat, I accept the love of self, if you mean by it the legitimate desire, the need that we all feel to gain what will make us happy. Far from destroying man's interest in himself, I would increase it; I would reinforce it by making it what it ought to be, by making him a member of a happy community, where the happiness of all should increase all others' hap-

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piness. We have only to be convinced that to work for others is working for ourselves. Social injustice, like eternal hatred, is a concentration of individual suffering; and that is why an understanding among ourselves is necessary, a reorganization of labor based on the sure truth that our highest happiness will be realized on the day when all are happy alike and all men are our neighbors."

Hermeline laughed; and the Abbé Merle again interposed:

"To love our neighbors as ourselves is the teaching of our Divine Master. But He also told us that happiness was not of this world; and that it is folly—worse than folly—to expect to realize on this earth the kingdom of God, which is only to be found in heaven."

"But it will be realized upon the earth some day," said Luc. "All the efforts of humanity in the way of progress, all science, and the future community of which I spoke, will realize it."

But the school-master, who was no longer listening to him, turned on the priest.

"Ah, no, abbé; don't tell us any more about paradise, that promise with which you deceive poor dupes. The Jesus of whom you speak was one of us. He was a revolutionist in his own day—a free-thinker."

The battle here began again. Once more Dr. Novarre had to separate them; agreeing first with one, then with the other. As always happens in such cases, the questions they debated remained unsettled, for no positive solution was ever offered. Coffee had been long over when Jordan, the dreamer, spoke the last word:

"The only truth is to be found in labor. This world will some day be just what labor has made of it."

Sœurette, who had earnestly and excitedly listened to Luc, without joining in the conversation, now spoke of a plan she had for establishing a place where women employed in the factories might leave their little children. Then the priest, the doctor, and the teacher became all of one mind; their conversation was friendly, carried on in low tones, as they talked over plans by which this asylum

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might be conducted so as to avoid the abuses that had crept into similar establishments. In the park the shadows of the great trees grew longer on the grass, while the wood-pigeons hopped about the lawns in the soft sunshine of September.

It was quite four o'clock before the three guests left La Crêcherie. For the sake of exercise, Jordan and Luc walked with them as far as the first houses of the town. Then, as they both strolled back over the stony moors that Jordan left uncultivated, he wanted to turn a little aside so as to pass where Lange, the potter, lived. He had let him build himself a little place in one corner of his property, below the blast-furnace, but had asked no rent from him. Lange, as well as Morfain, had made his dwelling in a rocky hollow, worn away by former torrents, at the foot of the Monts Bleuses, alongside of the great cliff which terminated the mountain promontory. And, finally, he had built three kilns near the place where he dug his clay, and there he lived without either God or master, free and independent, alone with his pottery.

"He is, without doubt, an extremist," said Jordan, whom Luc was questioning concerning this man, in whom he took an interest. "And what you tell me passed the other evening in the Rue de Brias does not surprise me. He has had the luck to be liberated, or the affair might have turned out badly for him; he was pretty well compromised. But you have no idea how intelligent he is, and what a sense of art he shows in his earthen pots, although he has never had any instruction. He was born here. His father and mother were poor; he was left an orphan when he was ten years old, and got employment with some masons; afterwards he was apprenticed to a potter, and he became his own master, as he said, laughing, when I allowed him to build his little place up here. . . . I take an especial interest in his experiments with fire-clay, for, as you know, I am trying to discover what will resist the terrible heat of our electric furnaces."

Luc, raising his eyes, saw among shrubs and furze

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bushes, surrounded by a little wall of rough stones, the abode of Lange, which was like the hut of some savage. And, as on the threshold a tall, handsome, dark girl was standing, Luc asked:

"Is he married?"

"No; but he lives here with this girl, who is at once his wife and slave. . . . It is quite a little story. Five years ago, when she was barely fifteen, he found her ill and dying in a ditch, abandoned probably by some band of gypsies. No one ever knew precisely where she came from. She will not answer when she is asked questions. She had no shoes on her feet when he picked her up. Even now she scarcely ever puts any on except when she goes to town, and so all the country, and Lange himself, calls her nothing but Barefoot. He has no other operative. Barefoot is his assistant, and helps him drag his little cart when he takes his pottery from fair to fair. It is his way of disposing of his products, and they are well known in all this part of the country."

Standing on the threshold of the hut, which was closed by a grated door, Barefoot waited the arrival of the gentlemen, and Luc could examine her dark face with its regular but sunburned features, her hair as black as ink, her large, wild eyes, which would sometimes show wonderful sweetness when they looked at Lange. He noticed, too, her bare feet, a child's feet, in color a light brown, for they were constantly treading in damp clay. She stood there in her working clothes, scantily covered with some gray stuff, displaying her shapely legs, her muscular arms, and her little muscular throat. Then, when she felt sure that the gentleman who was walking with the proprietor of their domain must be a friend, she quitted her post of observation and went back to the kiln that she was superintending, after having given notice of a visit to her master.

"Ah! Is it you, Monsieur Jordan?" cried Lange, coming forward in his turn. "Just imagine that after my adventure the other evening Barefoot has taken it into her head that somebody must be coming to arrest me. And

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I do think that if any police fellow should make his appearance he would not find it easy to get out of her claws. . . . I suppose you have come to see my new refractory bricks. Look—here they are, and I will tell you what they are made of."

Luc perfectly recognized the little man, knotty and stained, whom he had seen in the half-light of the Rue de Brias, announcing the inevitable final destruction of Beauclair, hurling at it his anathema, and condemning it for its crimes. Only, as he looked at him more closely, he was surprised by the height of his forehead, half hidden under his black, bushy hair, and at his keen eyes, shining with intelligence, that might easily be provoked to shoot out angry gleams. And yet, under this rough exterior, and this apparent violence of disposition, Luc was surprised that he felt himself in the presence of a thinker, a dreamer, a rustic poet, who, absorbed in his narrow idea of justice, had come to desire to blow up the whole old guilty world.

Jordan, after having introduced Luc as a young engineer and one of his own friends, asked Lange, with a laugh, to show him what he called his museum.

"If monsieur can take any interest in it. . . . They are only things that amuse me, things that I bake to please myself; see, all this earthenware in this shed. . . . You can look at it while I explain my bricks to Monsieur Jordan."

Luc grew more and more astonished. Under this shed stood little figures of peasants in glazed pottery, vases, pots, and dishes of singular forms and colors, which, while denoting great ignorance, were deliciously original. The chance colors produced by firing were superb; there were enamels that had wonderful richness of tone. But what struck Luc most in the collection of the things Lange made for his usual customers at fairs and markets—the plates and dishes, saucepans, pitchers, and pots—was the elegance of their shapes, the charm of their pure coloring, all of it a sort of happy development of the taste of the people. It seemed as if the potter had drawn this art from the

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genius of his ancestors; that into his works had passed the very soul of workmen of past ages; that their skill had found its way into his fingers, for, as if by instinct, he had found primitive shapes, of admirable beauty, adapted to daily use. And each *chef-d'œuvre* was adapted to daily use, and had a living grace as a reason for its existence.

When Lange came back with Jordan, who had given him an order for several hundred bricks, to be experimented with in a new electrical furnace, he received Luc's felicitations with apparent pleasure. Luc marvelled at the beauty and brightness of his works, so light, so brilliant with blue and purple, as if they had been conceived in sunshine.

"Yes, yes. These things put corn-flowers and bluebells in the houses. I have always thought that people ought to decorate their roofs and their façades with them. It would not cost much, either; if tradesmen would not steal, and you would see how nice a town would look; just like flowers in green grass. But there is nothing to be done with our wretched *bourgeoisie* nowadays."

And all of a sudden he fell back into a fit of party passion. He broke forth with his ideas of ultra-anarchy, which he had acquired from reading certain pamphlets that had come into his hands he could not tell by what chance. First of all, he said, everything that now is must be destroyed; everything must be taken possession of by the revolution. Salvation cannot be attained without the destruction of all authority, for if one power remains—no matter what—it will lead to the reconstruction of the whole edifice of tyranny and iniquity. Then the free commune might be established, without any kind of government—none would be necessary, thanks to the good understanding among groups constantly changing, constantly modified according to every one's needs and wishes. And Luc was struck by recognizing in all this the ideas of Fourier; for the final dream of both of them was the same. There was the same appeal to the passion for creation, for the same free expansion of the individual in one harmonious society, in which the good of each citizen re-

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quired the good of all; only the way they were to set about these things was different. The anarchist was a Fourierist, a man who upheld association, but a Fourierist who had become exasperated, who had lost faith in political amelioration, and had resolved to conquer social happiness by force and by extermination, since centuries of slow evolution had not seemed likely to accelerate the catastrophe —the eruption of the volcano.

So when Luc mentioned Bonnaire, Lange became ferocious in his irony. He spoke of the latter with as much bitter disdain as if he had been a *bourgeois*. "Ah! yes! Bonnaire's barracks!" he said; "that scheme of association by which men would be numbered, disciplined, and imprisoned like convicts at the galleys." And, shaking his fist towards Beauclair, the roofs and chimneys of which he could see below him, he once more uttered his prophetical malediction on the corrupt city which fire was to destroy, which should be utterly razed to the ground; and from its ashes should come forth the city of truth and righteousness.

Astonished at his violence, Jordan looked at him with curiosity.

"But, Lange, my good fellow, you yourself are not badly off."

"No, Monsieur Jordan; I am fortunate—I am as lucky as a man can be. I am living here like a free man; it is almost like a realization of the aims of anarchy. You have let me occupy this little bit of ground—ground which is the birthright of us all. I am my own master. I pay no rent to any man. I work here as I please. I have no master to interfere with me; no workmen I can oppress. I sell my own pots and pans to good people who have need of them. I am not robbed by wholesale dealers, nor do I let retail dealers rob their customers. And I find time to amuse myself, when I want amusement, by baking these little figures in my kiln; for their bright colors please me. . . . Ah! no; we make no complaints; we enjoy life when the sun shines—don't we, Barefoot?"

She had drawn near them, half clad, that she might

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better do her work, her hands reddened by having just taken a pot out of the fire. She smiled divinely as she looked up at the man—the god whose servant she had made herself, and to whom she had given herself body and soul.

"But, nevertheless," said Lange, "there are too many poor creatures who are suffering, and we must blow up Beauclair some fine morning, so that it may be rebuilt properly. The only propaganda must be one of action; bombs will be the only things that will arouse the people. . . . What would you say should I tell you that I have in this hut all that is necessary to make three dozen bombs —bombs of extraordinary power? Some fine day I shall set out with my cart, which I draw and Barefoot pushes. It is pretty heavy when it is full of pottery, and has to be dragged over bad country roads, from market to market in the villages. It's all right when we can rest under trees or near springs and fountains. . . . But when that day comes we shall not go beyond Beauclair; we shall go up and down its streets, and we shall have a bomb hidden in every one of our cooking-pots. We shall put one under the Sub-Prefecture, another under the Mayoralty-House, another under the Court-House, another under the church — in short, wherever authority can be destroyed. Our slow matches will burn just the necessary time. Then all of a sudden Beauclair will be blown into the air; a horrible volcanic eruption will make an end of it. . . . Hah! what do you think of my little journey, my cart, my little distribution of bombs concealed in pots —bombs that I have manufactured to promote human happiness?"

He spoke with an air of ecstasy; his face seemed illuminated, and as the swarthy girl beside him laughed when he laughed, he said:

"Is not that so, Barefoot? I shall pull, and you'll push; it will be better than when we went by the bank of the Mionne all the way to the fair at Magnolles."

Jordan did not answer. He only made a gesture to the effect that as a learned man he considered that all

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this was nonsense. But when they had taken leave of Lange and were walking back to La Crêcherie, Luc still shivered at the thought of such a direful poetic dream—a dream of happiness promoted by destruction, such as haunted the brains of a few uneducated poets in the crowd of those who have lost their birthright. And the two men reached home in silence, each absorbed in his own thoughts.

They went at once into the laboratory, where they found Sœurette, who, seated quietly at a little table, was copying one of her brother's manuscripts. She often put on a long blue apron and helped him to make certain delicate experiments. Now she raised her head, smiled at him and his companion, and went on with her work.

"Ah!" said Jordan, stretching himself at full length in an easy-chair. "I have no such happy hours as I find here, in the midst of all my things and all my papers. . . . As soon as I come back to them, hope and peace return."

On entering the large room he had walked round it with a sort of affectionate interest, as if he wanted to resume possession of it—to be sure he was in it; to bask in the calm and comfort of his hopes. The sides of the large bay-window were open, and the setting sun shone in as if with a soft caress; while in the distance, through the trees, could be seen the roofs and windows of Beauclair.

"What useless misery there is in these disputes," said Jordan, while Luc, who had not sat down, was walking about the room. "After breakfast I was listening to the abbé and the school-master, astonished that such people could waste their time in trying to convince each other, when each of them was placed at different ends of the questions in dispute, and neither could understand the other. And did you notice that every time they came back exactly to the same point? . . . What a useless thing it is to shut one's self up in that way to defend what one considers to be absolute truth, outside of experience, and to fight each other with contradictory arguments. I was entirely on the side of the doctor, who took delight in nullifying the arguments of both, just by setting one against

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the other! It is just the same with Lange. It is pitiful to see a good fellow dream such stuff, and go astray in an error more obvious and more dangerous than their errors, because he trusts to chance, and despises certainty. . . . No! political disturbances are not in my line. The things that these people say seem to me devoid of all reason. The great questions that they raise are, in my eyes, conundrums fit only to amuse us on the road of progress, and I cannot understand why fierce battles should be fought over such small matters, when the discovery of one of the smallest scientific truths does more for human progress than can be accomplished by half a century of social strife."

Luc began to laugh, and he said:

"Then you are yourself falling into the idea of abstract truth. Man has to struggle. Politics are the necessary means by which man defends his rights and acquires for himself the greatest happiness possible."

"You are right," replied Jordan, with his simple frankness, "and possibly my contempt for politics arises from some internal remorse that I have taken so little interest in the politics of my country. . . . But, really, I think that, for all that, I am a good citizen when I shut myself up in my laboratory, for I believe that each of us should aid the nation with such ability as he can put into his work. True revolutionists, believe me, the real men of action, who are promoting truth and justice for the morrow, are scientists. Governments fall and pass away; nations grow, shine with splendor, and decay. But what matter! The discoveries of science will go on, will increase, will give mankind more and more light and certainty. The close of a century is a small matter; the march of human progress will always be resumed; human nature will insist on having knowledge, whatever may be the obstacles. It is foolish to object that we can never know everything; we have got to know all we can, that we may attain the greatest happiness. And, therefore, I say, how useless are all the political disputes that excite nations! While the salvation of progress is supposed to be involved

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in the fate of a ministry, it is really the scientist—the man of learning—who will be master of the future whenever he shall be able to enlighten men with a new spark of truth. All injustice will cease when truth shall reign."

There was silence. Sœurette laid down her pen, and was now listening. After reflecting a few moments, Jordan continued:

"Work, ah! work. I owe my life to work. You see what a poor, frail creature I am. I remember how my mother used to wrap me up in flannel when there was a high wind; and yet she set me to work as something that might give me better health. She did not crush life out of me by study, nor send me to schools which are positive galleys for intelligence in its earliest stages. She infused into me the habit of regular work, work that was never monotonous, work that I loved. That was how I learned to work, just as I learned to breathe or walk. Work became necessary to my very being—the necessary, natural exertion of my limbs and all my organs; even the means and the end of my life itself. I have lived because I have worked. A balance was struck between the world and me. I gave back in work what life gave me in sensations; and I think that is the secret of all health—a well-regulated reciprocity—perfect adaptation of the human organism to its surroundings. . . . Frail as I am, I may live to be very old. I became sure of it the moment I felt that I was a little machine carefully constructed and made to work on system."

Luc had paused in his slow walk. Like Sœurette, he was listening with the deepest attention.

"But that is only what regards health—hygiene and sanitary laws, that we may live in health," went on Jordan. "Work is more—it is life itself. Life is the perpetual work of chemical and mechanical forces. Never, since the first atom set itself in motion to unite with other atoms, has the great work of creation ceased; and this creation which is going on, which ever will go on, is the task of eternity, the universal work of the world, to which each of us must bring his stone. Is not the universe an im-

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mense workshop in which no man can be idle, in which the very least of us are doing our part in a mighty work, in which the machine goes on and turns out what it has made and is creating incessantly, whether it be simple fermentations or things that are of the utmost perfection? The fields ripe with harvest have been at work; forests are at work when the trees put forth their foliage; rivers that flow along the valleys are at work; oceans, as they roll their waves from one continent to another, work; and worlds, borne by the rhythm of their gravitation through infinite space, are at work. There is not one being, not one thing in all the universe, that can be idle. Everything is impelled to work, is put to work, and is forced to do its part in the work common to all. Whatever does not do its work at once disappears, and is rejected as useless and superfluous. It must give place to what will work—to some worker who is indispensable. That is the law of life, which is, in short, the law of all things. Work is a force in perpetual activity, a god in all religions, working out the final happiness of which we feel the imperious necessity."

For a few moments Jordan seemed again absorbed in dreams. Then he went on:

"And how admirably can work regulate things; what order it creates wherever it reigns! It is peace and joy, as well as health. I am amazed when I see it despised, belittled, looked upon as a shame or as a punishment. If it has saved me from certain death, it has given me also all the good that there is in me; it has recreated my intelligence; it has given me nobleness. And what an admirable organizer it is!—how it regulates the workings of our minds, the play of our muscles, the special function of each group in a multitude of laborers! It is a political constitution, a police to look after humanity, a reason for maintaining social order. We are born to do the work of the world. Every one of us must help it on; we cannot explain the necessity for our lives except by perceiving that nature wanted one more laborer to carry on its work. Any other explanation is false and self-glori-

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ous. Our individual lives seem like a sacrifice to the universal life of future worlds. There is no such thing as happiness, unless we place it in the united happiness of perpetual united labor. And that is why I wish that some one would preach to the world the religion of labor, and sing hosannas to labor, as to a savior, the only true source of health, peace, and happiness."

He ceased, and Sœurette gave a little cry of tender enthusiasm.

"Ah! brother, how true that is, how right you are—and it is all so beautiful!"

But Luc, who seemed still more impressed, remained standing, motionless, his eyes gleaming with light. Little by little, he seemed like an apostle under the influence of a ray of inspiration. Then suddenly he spoke:

"Listen to me, Jordan: You must not sell your works to Delaveau. You must keep them—keep them all—the blast-furnace and the mine. This is my answer. I give it to you now. I need think of it no longer. My resolution is made."

Surprised by these words, so abrupt and unexpected—for their connection with the words he had just uttered Jordan did not at first see—the master of La Crêcherie winked his eyes.

"How is this? My dear Luc, why do you tell me this? . . . Explain yourself."

But the young man for a moment still kept silence. He was overcome by emotion. This pæan sung to labor, this glorification of work as an organizer and a pacificator, had given him a sudden shock, as if a spirit had inspired him, opening before him a vast horizon where up to that moment there had seemed only fog. Now he understood, now he was animated, now he felt absolute certainty as to his life-work. It was faith that seemed to shine forth in living words that came from his mouth with extraordinary fluency and persuasion.

"You must not sell to Delaveau. . . . I went to look at the old mine this morning. Even what can be got out of the present lodes will yield a handsome profit if sub-

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jected to the chemical processes recently discovered; and Morfain has convinced me that we may soon find some excellent lodes on the other side of the gorge. . . . There will probably be untold wealth there. The blast-furnace will do the smelting without great expense, and if it were made to include a forge, furnaces for puddling, furnaces for crucibles, drawing-rollers, and steam-hammers, the manufacture of rails and frame-work could be undertaken on a large scale, so as to compete successfully with the largest steel-works in the East and North."

Jordan's surprise increased, and he seemed almost alarmed. A sudden protest escaped him:

"But I don't want to be richer. I have too much money already, and I was thinking of selling the works to get rid of all these sources of gain."

Luc interrupted him with an eager gesture.

"Let me finish, my dear friend. . . . It is not that I wish to make you richer. It is the poor who have their wrongs, the laborers whom we have been talking about, the victims of overwork—work that has debased them, that has treated them like convicts at the galleys, that I wish to save. You said just now, proudly, that labor ought to be a social factor, and, as you said it, a way to save these people seemed to reveal itself to me. The just and happy society of the future can be carried out solely by the reorganization of labor, which is the only way to admit every one to a fair share of wealth. I have just had a dazzling vision of how it may all be realized. The only solution of our miseries and sufferings is this: It is no use to try to rebuild the old edifice, which is cracked and crumbling, except on the foundation of work—work by all and for all, work accepted as the lever of the universe, work which regulates the worlds. . . . Well, it is just that that I want to attempt here. I shall, at least, be able to make my experiment an example; it will be a reorganization of labor on a small scale, a fraternal factory, a rough draught, as it were, of what society may become in the future. It will show how different it can be from that other establishment at the Pit, which thrives upon the

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toil of its wage-earners; that prison, those galleys where the workman is a slave, tortured and dishonored."

And he went on speaking with eager words. He sketched out his late dream, all that had been working within him since he read Fourier—a project of association between wealth, work, and talent. Jordan would furnish the necessary capital; Bonnaire and his comrades would bring the strength of their arms; and he himself would contribute the brain which would plan and direct everything. He was walking about the room again; he pointed with his outstretched hand to the roofs of Beauclair; it was Beauclair that he hoped to save—Beauclair that he would deliver from the criminal and shameful things that he had seen there in the last three days. As he unfolded his plan for its rehabilitation, he was astonished at himself; he was filled with wonder. He was putting into words the mission that had been conceived within him, he hardly knew how, while he had been looking about him to find it, with a heart filled with pity. Now his way was suddenly made clear; his mission was found.

It furnished him a solution of the painful questions that had troubled his thoughts in the long hours of his wakeful night—questions to which he had found no answer; and, above all, it provided a response to those appeals for help which had come to him out of the darkness. He now heard them distinctly; he would hasten to help those who thus called on him; he would save them by labor regenerated—work which need not divide men into classes, hating and devouring one another, but which would unite them into one brotherhood—one family, where the labor of all should be utilized in one common effort for the general good.

"But," objected Jordan, "to carry out the system of Fourier does not involve the destruction of the relations between master and laborer. Even among those who favor a division of profits, the system of wage-payer and wage-earner only changes its name. You will have to go so far as the wild dream of anarchy if you want to destroy it."

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Luc could not but agree; and this led him to self-examination. The theories of Bonnaire, the collectivist, the man who believed in association, and the dreams of Lange, the anarchist, still sounded in his ears. The disputation between the Abbé Merle, Hermeline the schoolmaster, and Dr. Novarre was never-ending, recommencing it was likely to go on forever. It was one everlasting chaos of contradictory opinions. Then there passed in review before him all the objections that had been offered to the first writers on the subject by Saint-Simon, Auguste Comte, and Prudhomme. Why should he pin his faith on Fourier's formula when there were so many others? He knew of some experiments in Fourierism that had turned out well, but he also knew how long it took to work out an experiment, and the difficulty of obtaining decisive results from it. Perhaps this was partly because his nature revolted against revolutionary violence, for he believed in scientific evolution, going on without a break, with all eternity to work in. The sudden total overthrow of the present system, he felt, could not take place without involving terrible catastrophes, the result of which would be to produce more poverty and suffering than existed before. Therefore, was it not best to accept the opportunity now offered of carrying on a practical experiment—of making an attempt in which all his own better feelings could take part, his kindness of heart, his faith in the latent goodness to be found in all men, in love and the domestic hearth, and the tenderness he felt for all mankind? He was carried away, it seemed to him, by a heroic inspiration, and he was filled with faith in his experiment; he foresaw that success would be certain. And, besides, even if Fourier's doctrine did not lead to the immediate destruction of the system of wage-payer and wage-earner, it might put things on the road to it. It would lead in the end to conquest, to the destruction of capital, and to the inutility of money, that source of all men's woes. The great quarrel among the groups of socialists was about means only; for all agreed as to the end in view, and all would one day become reconciled in the happy city, after

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it should have been constructed. He wanted to lay the foundation-stones of this glorious city, and to begin by associating together all men disposed to help him, and by drawing all scattered forces round him, since he felt sure that there was nothing better to begin with, considering the present frightful state of things.

But Jordan was still sceptical.

"Fourier," said he, "no doubt had gleams of genius. I am sure of that. But he has been dead for sixty years, and even if he still retains some devoted disciples, I do not see that his religion shows any probability of conquering the world."

"It took Christianity four centuries to conquer part of it," replied Luc, quickly; "and I do not adopt all the ideas of Fourier. To me he was only a wise man, who in one day of genial lucidity had a vision of the truth. He was not the only one, for others had anticipated his formula, and others will carry it out.... Just see. You cannot deny that the evolution going on to-day had its origin far off in the past. Our whole century has been pregnant with the idea of creating a new social system, which will be born before long. Laborers during the past hundred years have been gradually obtaining more recognition in our social system, and before long will be masters of their own destinies, through that law of science which assures the existence of the strongest, the best, and the most worthy. ... We are to help this on; we are to take part in the final struggle between the privileged classes, who have stolen wealth, and the great crowd of laborers, who wish to have their share in the good things of which they have been despoiled for centuries. We learn all this from history, which tells us how some have enjoyed the greatest possible happiness at the expense of others, and how the poor creatures thus disinherited have never ceased to struggle to regain as much as they could. ... The bitter fight has gone on for fifty years, and that is why, you see, the privileged classes, mad with fear, are surrendering, of their own free-will, certain of their privileges. The time draws near; we feel it by the concessions that prop-

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erty-owners and men of wealth are making to the people. In politics much has been granted them, and in matters of social economy more will have to be given. New laws in favor of working-men, humanitarian reforms, the triumph of labor syndicates and unions, presage what will take place in a future era. The battle between labor and capital is now at a crisis, and we may predict that defeat will be with the latter. A time will come when the system which divides wage-payers and wage-earners will come to an end. And that is why I feel sure of victory if we assist the system which is to replace that of the wage-payer and the wage-earner, that reorganization of labor which will give us a more just social system and a higher civilization."

He seemed to gleam with faith, hope, and charity. He went on. He recapitulated the history of the past—the robbery, from the earliest ages, of the weak by the strong; crowds of poor wretches reduced to slavery; he spoke of men who had committed crimes that they might not make restitution to the needy who were dying of hunger and violence. And all the world's wealth heaped by time, he showed, was in the hands of but a few persons—property-owners—who had lands, houses, factories, and mines in which lay unworked coal and metal, men who put capital into transportation, rolling-stock, canals, railroads—nay, even into government bonds, men who owned the gold and silver, hundreds and thousands of which were paid out by the banks; in short, all the good things of this earth, everything that contributes to the good fortune of men. And was it not an abomination that all this wealth should lead only to the frightful indigence of the greater number of people? Did this not cry for justice? Was there not an inevitable necessity for a new division? Such injustice on the one hand, such idleness on the other, caused by a plethora of riches, while hopeless toil, necessitated by poverty, had turned men into wolves. Instead of uniting to conquer and utilize the forces of nature, men devoured one another; the barbarous social system made them hate their fellow-men, made them err, go mad, abandon their

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children and their aged parents, crush women into beasts of burden or into instruments of lust. The laborers themselves, corrupted by bad example, resigned themselves to slavery, and succumbed to the baseness that was universal. And what bad use was made of wealth—enormous sums spent for war, large amounts given to useless office-holders, to judges, and to gendarmes!—besides all the money that lay useless in the hands of merchants, those parasitical middle-men, who make their money out of consumers! Such was the daily leakage of wealth caused by an illogical social system. There was crime, besides, and also hunger, imposed by owners on their workpeople to increase their own profits. They would reduce the output of a factory; they would impose days of idleness on miners; and they would use poverty as an instrument of warfare that they might keep up prices; and then they would be astonished if the machine broke down under such a mass of suffering, injustice, and shame!

"No, no!" cried Luc, "it must come to an end; else humanity will be destroyed in some last outbreak of insanity. A new agreement must be made between capital and labor. Every man born into this world has the right to live; and the soil is the common property of all. The tools for toil must be given to every man; and every one must do his own personal share in the work of all. . . . If history, with its past crimes and hatreds, has thus far been merely the abominable record of former robbery and the tyranny of a few robbers who have stimulated men to cut each other's throats, and to set up law-courts, and build prisons to defend their ill-gotten gains, it is high time to begin a new era, and on the opening of a new century to commence with a single act of justice giving back to men the riches of the earth, letting labor become the universal law of human society, even as it is the law of the universe, that peace may be made among us and blessed fraternity commence its reign. . . . It will come to pass; I will work for it; I shall succeed."

He was so passionately in earnest, so grand, so sure of conquest as he stood there like a prophet in his enthu-

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siasm, that Jordan, astonished, turned to Sœurette, and said:

"Look at him—is he not handsome?"

But Sœurette, excited and pale, had not taken her eyes off him, as if her whole being was possessed by a religious fervor.

"Oh! he *is* handsome," she said, in a low voice, "and he is good."

"Only, my friend," said Jordan, with a smile, "handsome and good though you may be, you are an anarchist, though you think yourself an evolutionist, and you are right in saying that while all reformers begin by the doctrine of Fourier, they will end by a free commune, and by mankind in perfect liberty."

Luc began to laugh.

"At any rate, let us begin; we shall see in time where we shall end."

Jordan had gone back into a reverie, and did not seem to hear him. He, the man of science, shut up in his laboratory, had been deeply moved, and though he still doubted if it were possible to hasten the march of humanity, he was not disposed to obstruct the attempt.

"No doubt," he said, slowly, "individual effort is often very powerful. To set facts in motion, it needs a man who can will and who will act; a rebel of genius and of free thought who is the bearer of a new truth to men. . . . In a shipwreck, when the only chance of safety lies in cutting a cable or chopping away a mast, a man and an axe are all that are needed. The will is everything; the man who saves is he who wields the axe. . . . Nothing can resist him; he can remove mountains; the seas draw back before a man who of his own initiative knows how to act."

That was it. In these few words Luc found what gave new fuel to the power of will and of conviction that burned within him. He as yet knew nothing of his own genius; but it was in him, like strength that had been long accumulating, a revolt against unrighteousness; an ardent desire to see justice done to all. He was a man who ex-

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ercised his private judgment; he would accept nothing but what could be demonstrated scientifically. He stood alone; he wished to act alone; he put all his faith into action. He was a man who could dare—that was enough—his mission would be accomplished.

There was silence for a few moments. Then Jordan spoke in a tone of friendly cordiality:

"As I have told you, in hours of depression I have thought of letting Delaveau have all my works — the blast-furnace and the mine and all the land — that I might get rid of them and give myself up in peace to my studies and experiments. Take them; I prefer to give them to you, who will make good use of them. All that I ask of you is to make me completely free; to leave me in my own corner to labor undisturbed, to complete my life-work, and never again to talk to me about these things."

Luc looked at him with sparkling eyes, in which shone gratitude and deep affection. Then, with hesitation, he made answer:

"That is not all, my friend. I want your large heart to do something more. I dare not undertake anything without money. I shall want five hundred thousand francs to set up such a factory and such workshops as those of which I have dreamed; then I can reorganize labor, and make it the foundation of that future city. . . . I am persuaded that I can make of it a good business enterprise, since your capital will go into the association, and it is sure to bring you a large share of the profits."

And though Jordan wanted to interrupt him, he continued:

"Yes; I know you do not care to become more wealthy. But yet you must live; and if you give me your money I want to make sure that you will have means to lead a comfortable existence, so that nothing may interrupt you in your peaceful work as a great scientific laborer."

Again there was a silence, grave, but not without emotion, in the great laboratory where so much labor lay waiting for the moment when it might bring forth an abun-

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dant harvest. The decision to be taken was so important that it seemed to send through all of them a kind of religious thrill as they waited for the decision.

"You are full of the spirit of self-sacrifice and of goodness," said Luc. "Did you not tell me yesterday that the discoveries you are making, the electric furnaces which must reduce the necessity for human strength, must enrich men with new fortunes, you would not work yourself, you would give them away. . . . It is not a gift I ask from you; it is fraternal aid—help which will enable me to overthrow injustice and make others happy."

Then Jordan quietly consented.

"My friend," said he, "I am ready. You shall have the money to realize your dream; but as it is not right to deceive you, I will tell you that your dream is, in my eyes, only a generous utopian scheme, for you have not fully convinced me. Excuse my doubts. I am a scientist. . . . But no matter. You are a good, brave man. Try what you can do. I am with you."

Luc gave a cry of triumph, an outburst from his whole being. He seemed to be walking on air.

"Oh! thank you. Now I know that the work will be accomplished, and we shall all have a holy joy in it."

Sœurette had not moved; she had taken no part in the conversation. But the kindness of her heart shone in her face, great tears filled her eyes. She rose, as if irresistibly impelled, went up to Luc, and, without speaking, being almost beside herself, she kissed him on the forehead, while her tears wetted his cheeks. Then, in her great emotion, she threw herself into her brother's arms, and sobbed there for some time.

Rather surprised at her kissing the young man, Jordan felt anxious.

"Why, how is this, little sister? You do not disapprove, I hope? I know I ought to have consulted you, . . . but it is not too late. Are you with us?"

"Oh yes!—oh yes!" she stammered, smiling, and beaming through her tears. "You are like two brothers, and as such I will serve you. Make any use of me you can."

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That night about eleven o'clock Luc leaned out of the window of his abode (a detached cottage in the courtyard, called a pavilion), as he had done the night before, to breathe the fresh, calm night air.

Opposite to him were some rocky, uncultivated fields; Beauclair lay asleep; one by one its lamps were being extinguished, while to his left the Pit still rang with the blows of its great hammers. Never had the breath of that unhappy giant seemed to him to come with more oppression. And, as on the previous evening, he heard a slight noise on the other side of the road, so slight that he fancied it was the flutter of a night bird. But his heart began to beat when the noise came again, for he recognized by the little rustle of a gown that some one was approaching. He recognized the same vague form that he had seen on the previous evening, so slight and so delicate that it seemed to float over the grass. And then, with a spring as light as that of a wild goat, a woman crossed the road and threw him a little bunch of mountain pinks, fresh gathered among the rocks, and with so strong a perfume that his room was scented by it.

"Oh! Josine! Josine!" he murmured, his heart filled with infinite tenderness.

She stood still, obedient to his voice, as in all things she would always be, with the same passionate gesture of gratitude, as when she had once before given him flowers as simple and uncultivated as she herself. He was refreshed by them; he enjoyed the little incident after all the physical and mental fatigue of that momentous day. Was not her presence the reward of his first effort—of his first resolute action in Beauclair? The bunch of flowers she had given him was an encouragement to what he had decided to do the next morning. It was through her that he loved all people who were suffering, she whom he wished to save from the monster's grasp. He had found her the most wretched, the most ill-used of human creatures, as near dropping, metaphorically, into the gutter as she had been to falling into the stream upon whose banks she sat. With that poor hand which toil had muti-

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lated, she seemed the incarnation of a whole race of victims, some giving their very being up to work, and some to what the vile call pleasure. As he had rescued her, so would he rescue others. She was also to him love's representative, the love so necessary to complete the happiness of his city of the future.

Softly he called her:

"Josine! Josine! Is it you, Josine?"

But without a word she fled away and was lost in the darkness of the uncultivated moorland.

"Josine! Josine! I know it is you. I have something to say to you."

Then, trembling but happy, she came back with her light step, and stopped upon the road below his window.

Then she breathed softly:

"Yes—it is I, Monsieur Luc."

He was in no hurry. He tried to see her better—so small, so vague, she seemed a vision that would float away into the darkness.

"Will you do me a service? . . . Tell Bonnaire to come and talk with me to-morrow morning. I have some good news for him. I have found work for him."

She tried to give a little soft laugh of delight. It seemed like the chirp of a little bird.

"Ah! you are good—you are so good!"

"And," he went on, in a low voice, for he was much moved, "I shall have work to give to any workman who may wish to work. Yes; I am going to try to see if I can find justice and happiness for you all."

She understood him. Her laugh was softer and more full of a sense of gratitude.

"Thank you, thank you, Monsieur Luc."

The vision slipped away, but he could see her light form disappear among the bushes. It was accompanied by another shadowy form. Nanet, whom he had not seen before, was trotting by the side of his big sister.

"Josine! Josine! . . . Au revoir, Josine!"

"Thank you, thank you, Monsieur Luc!"

He could no longer distinguish her; she had disappear-

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ed; but he seemed still to hear her thanks of joy and gratitude; that little birdlike chirp which the wind brought to him. It had an infinite charm for him; all his heart was filled with it; it was enchantment.

Luc stood long at the window, wrapped in boundless hope for the future. The Pit was panting with its accursed labor, and Guerdache, with its park, made a black dot in the middle of the bare plain of Roumagne. He looked down at old Beauclair, at its working-men's suburb, with its tottering houses half rotted away; the place lay asleep, worn out by poverty and suffering. And that was the sink of filth and vice that he wanted to purify, the stronghold of the system that he wanted to destroy with all its iniquities and cruelties, that he might purge humanity from its poison. He would build another suburb in the same place. He thought of his city of the future—the city of truth, justice, and happiness, the walls of whose white houses he saw in fancy rising in the midst of verdure, a place free and fraternal, bright with the sunshine of happiness.

Suddenly the sky was lighted up, a red flame shone over the roofs of Beauclair, over the Monts Bleuses, over the neighboring country. It was a flame from the blast furnace of La Crêcherie, and Luc had at first mistaken it for the sunrise. It was not dawn; it was like a shower of shooting-stars. Old Vulcan, tortured and chained to his anvil, was sending forth his last flames. Work should thenceforth bring health and joy to the workers—for the glad morrow was already at hand.

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BOOK II

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I

THREE years passed, and Luc had established his new works, which had given rise to an industrial town. The territory occupied more than two hundred and fifty acres below the acclivity of the Monts Bleuses, a vast and slightly sloping moorland that extended from the park of La Crêcherie to the accumulation of buildings of the Pit. As the beginning had to be on a small scale, only a small part of this moorland had been utilized, the rest having been reserved for hoped-for improvements in the future.

The works stood against a rocky promontory, directly under the blast-furnace, which communicated with the workshops by two elevators. Moreover, in anticipation of the revolution which Jordan's electric furnaces were expected to introduce, Luc had not paid much attention to the blast-furnace, and had left it in the hands of Morfain, to be managed as before. But in establishing his works he had made use of all possible modern improvements, both in building and machinery, that were likely to promote good returns for labor, and to diminish his laborers' toil. Besides this, he had been desirous that the houses of his industrial town, each of which stood in the middle of a garden, should be comfortable places of abode, in which family life might flourish. About fifty of these houses already occupied the land in the vicinity of La Crêcherie, and formed a little hamlet in the direction of Beauclair; for each house that was built was like a step made towards the construction of the city of the future, towards conquest of that doomed and guilty town. Furthermore, in the middle of the territory he had planned, Luc had erected the Communal House, a large building

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which contained school-rooms, a library, and a hall where men could meet one another socially, hold entertainments, and find places where they could play games and take baths. This was the only thing he had borrowed from the phalanstery of Fourier; allowing every man to build as he chose, without forcing him to keep to any regular street-line, for he recognized the necessity of association only as regarded certain public services. Finally, in the rear men organized co-operative stores, which grew larger day by day, a bakery, a butcher's shop, and a grocery, besides shops for the sale of clothing, tools, and other indispensable small articles for daily use—a complete co-operative association, in short, under the control of the works, regulated by the prosperity of La Crêcherie, or the reverse. Of course all was as yet only in embryo, but it had life, and it was possible to foresee what it might one day become. Luc would not have been able to proceed so fast had not his workmen become interested in his building plans. He was especially pleased to have been able to impound the water of springs, scattered among the rocks above, so as to provide water for the rising town — water clear, pure, and abundant, which cleansed the works and the club-house, irrigated the gardens, with their thick verdure, and was brought into all the houses, to be a source of health and joy.

One morning Fauchard, the man who drew crucibles out of the furnace in the Pit, came strolling up to La Crêcherie to see some of his former comrades. Always doleful, and incapable of deciding on any plan to better himself, he had stayed behind, while Bonnaire carried off to the new works his brother-in-law, Ragu, who persuaded Bourron to go with him. All three were now laboring in Luc's works, and Fauchard had come up to see and question them, still incapable of making up his mind whether or not to join them, stupefied as he was by fifteen years of monotonous labor, always doing the same thing, making the same effort, in the same burning heat, day after day. His deformity and his apathy had become such that although he had for months intended to make this visit,

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he had never been able to exert the necessary will-power; and as soon as he entered La Crêcherie he was astonished.

He had come from the dark, dirty, dusty Pit, the dilapidated halls of which were dimly lighted by narrow windows, and the first thing that surprised him was to find how much lighter were the halls of La Crêcherie, built of bricks and iron, with large bay-windows that let in floods of air and sunshine. All were paved with flagstones laid in cement, which greatly diminished the dust, which is so harmful. There was running water everywhere, so that it was easy to wash; and as there was very little smoke, thanks to the new chimneys, which burned up everything, extreme cleanliness prevailed, and could be maintained. The infernal den of the Cyclops had given place to large, light, airy, cheerful shops, where work seemed to have lost all its harshness. No doubt, as the use of electricity was as yet limited, the noise of the machinery was still deafening, and human effort was scarcely lightened. It was as yet hard to foresee that one day in the crucible and puddling furnaces mechanical appliances (as yet defective) might liberate the arms of men from labor that was too severe for human beings. So far, reform had been groping its way upon its march towards future progress. But what an amelioration had been effected by cleanliness, and by the air and sunshine which brightened the great halls, making work more cheerful and less heavy on the back and muscles! What a marvellous difference there was between these workshops and the holes full of darkness and of suffering in which gangs of workmen in the old factory hard by wore out their existence.

Fauchard had expected to find Bonnaire, the master-puddler, at his furnace, and was surprised to see him in the same hall superintending a great rolling-mill, which was turning out rails.

"Hullo! So you've given up puddling?"

"No; but we do a little bit of everything here. It is the rule of the place. We work two hours at one thing, two hours at another, and, upon my word, that rests one."

The truth was that Luc had not found it easy to make

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the workmen he was endeavoring to train into new methods give up their specialties. Later he knew that this reform would be carried out when children would have passed through several stages of apprenticeship; for satisfactory work needed variety, and only a few hours passed at each separate task.

"Ah!" sighed Fauchard, "how it would please me to have something to do besides pulling crucibles from the bottom of my furnace! But I don't know how. I could do nothing else."

The jerky noise of the rolling-mill was so great that it was necessary to speak very loud. He was, therefore, silent, and took advantage of a moment of respite to shake hands with Ragu and Bourron, who also were there, receiving the rails. That, too, surprised him. They did not make rails at the Pit, and he looked at these with confused thoughts, which he could not have put into words. What made him suffer most, conscious as he was that his manhood had been crushed out of him, and that he had become a mere human tool, was a vague feeling that he once had possessed intelligence and will. A little light still burned within him, like the night-lamp that is never put out. And his sad consciousness that he might have been a man, free, healthy, and happy, oppressed him. He thought of what he could have been but for the dark dungeon of brutish labor into which his slavery had thrown him! The rails which grew longer—ever longer—were like a road—an endless road—along which his thoughts travelled into the future, a future in which he had no longer any hope, nor indeed even any clear conception.

Under the hall in the vicinity of the great foundry, a special furnace melted the steel, and the metal in fusion was received in a large steel ladle, lined with fire-clay, which poured it mechanically into moulds in the form of ingots. Electric travelling-cranes of great power carried these heavy masses to the rolling-mills and to the riveting and bolting shops. For great steel frames especially, colossal pieces for bridges, and structural steel, there were trains of gigantic rolling-mills that drew out the ingots

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according to the shape desired, curved them also when necessary, and made them ready to be riveted or bolted together. For trusses and rails, simple pieces always of the same size, the trains of special rolling-mills worked with regularity and formidable activity. When the ingot of steel, like a gleam of sunshine, came out of the reheating-furnace, short and of the thickness of a man's body, it was placed in a frame between two rollers, which revolved in opposite directions, whence it came thinned by the groove, and entered the second frame, where it became thinner still. And so in frame after frame the grooves roughened out the piece of steel more and more, and finally gave the rail its exact profile and its proper length of thirty-three feet. All this did not take place without a deafening uproar, a terrible noise of jaws in the elongations between the frames, something like the mastication of a colossus chewing up a great mass of steel. Rails succeeded rails with marvellous rapidity, and it was difficult to follow the ingot, as it grew thinner and more elongated, and became a new rail, to be added to the others, as if the railroads of the world must extend to the very end of unknown countries, and so make the tour of the globe.

"For whom is all this?" asked the astonished Fauchard.

"For the Chinese," said Ragu, with a laugh.

But Luc at that moment was passing the rolling-mills. He generally spent his morning in the works, looking into every hall, conversing with the workmen like a comrade. He had had to retain in part the old hierarchy of master-workmen, superintendents, engineers, and clerks in the account and commercial offices. But he was already making great savings, thanks to his constant efforts to reduce as far as possible the number of heads of departments and of their underlings. Moreover, his hopes had been thus far realized. Although they had not yet found the excellent lodes of former times, the present ore of the mine, treated chemically, was giving a fair quality of cast-iron at a low cost, and hence the manufacture of structural steel and rails, sufficiently remunerative, assured the prosperity of the works. There was enough for every man

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to live upon, and the amount of the business grew larger every year. That was to Luc the most important thing, for his hopes were set on the future of his plans, on the certainty he felt of victory, whenever the gains of the factory were divided, if the workmen could see that their prosperity was increasing, and enjoy more happiness with less toil. Nevertheless, his life was passed in constant worries from the complex nature of the things he had to superintend, the large sums he had to furnish, the affairs of the little world he had to govern; with all his cares, in short, as an apostle, an engineer, and a financier. No doubt, success seemed to him certain, but how precarious it was as yet, how much his hopes were at the mercy of events that he could not foresee!

In the hubbub, Luc stopped and smiled at Bonnaire, Ragu, and Bourron, but he did not perceive Fauchard. He liked to be in this hall among the rolling-mills; to watch the making of the rails and of the structural steel always pleased him. "Ours is the good forge of peace," he used to say; and he contrasted it with the forge of war—the evil forge—at the Pit, where with so much care and at such great expense men were busy making shells and guns. Works of wonderful perfection, metal delicately manipulated, what for?—to produce monstrous engines of destruction, which cost nations millions of dollars, and ruin them that they may be prepared for war, even when war is not coming to exterminate them! Ah! let structural steel be multiplied, let useful edifices and happy cities be built, and bridges span the streams and valleys, and let rails drop ceaselessly from rolling-mills and elongate railroads endlessly, abolish frontiers, draw nations together, and conquer the whole earth, for the fraternal civilization of to-morrow!

But as Luc passed into the main hall of the foundry, where the great steam-hammer was beginning its dance, forging the entire trussing for an enormous bridge, the rolling-mills stopped, and there was a respite for the making ready of a new profile. Fauchard drew near his old comrades, and conversation began.

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"Well, things are going ahead here. Are you satisfied?"

"Satisfied? Of course we are," said Bonnaire. "We work only eight hours a day, and thanks to the change of work, one grows much less weary. Work is more interesting."

Bonnaire, tall and strong, with his broad face full of health and kindliness, was one of the firm supporters of the new works. He was one of the council of management. He felt also great gratitude to Luc for having taken him into his employ when he had quitted the Pit, and did not know what was to become of him. Nevertheless, his uncompromising communism suffered under the *régime* of simple association which prevailed at La Crêcherie, in the affairs of which capital played an important part. The revolutionist that was in him—the workman dreaming of perfection—protested against this state of things. But he was wise. He worked, and incited his comrades to work, with the utmost devotion to Luc, since he had promised to await the result of his experiment.

"So," resumed Fauchard, "you are all making money—twice as much as you did by the day down yonder?"

Ragu began to sneer, and his laugh was bitter.

"Oh! twice as much! Say, a hundred francs a day, besides our champagne and cigars."

Ragu had merely followed Bonnaire in coming to hire himself to La Crêcherie, and, though he was not badly off, so much order and regularity were offensive to him, and he now began to sneer and treat his good fortune with derision.

"A hundred francs!" cried Fauchard, with a gasp. "Do you earn a hundred francs a day?"

Bourron, who was still Ragu's shadow, thought he ought to go further.

"A hundred francs to begin with!" he said, "and we get paid for Sundays."

But Bonnaire shrugged his shoulders with a grave air of contempt, while the two others were joking.

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"Can't you see, Fauchard, that they are talking nonsense and making fun of you? . . . When the accounts are made up after the payment of the dividends, we don't get more than you do by the day. Only every time they are settled there is a little something extra, and it is quite certain in time it will be something superb. . . . Then, too, we have all sorts of advantages; our future is assured; it costs us less to live, thanks to our co-operative stores, and we have our pleasant little houses for almost nothing. . . . Of course, it is not full justice, but all the same we are on the right road."

Ragu went on laughing, and began to feel a strong wish to gratify one of his other hatreds, for if he mocked at La Crêcherie, he never spoke of the Pit without fierce anger.

"And Delaveau," said he; "how does that beast of a Delaveau bear up under it? It pleases me to think that all this must annoy him mightily—these new works set up close to his own, which look as if they were going to do a good business. . . . He is furious, isn't he?"

Fauchard made a vague gesture.

"Of course he must be furious, but he does not show it. . . . And then, you see, I don't know. I have worries enough of my own without troubling myself about those of other people. . . . I have heard he did not care a rap for your works and your competition. He says, as to that, that he will always have shells and guns to make, because men are such fools that they will always be killing one another."

Luc, who was returning from the main hall of the great foundry, heard his words. For three years, ever since he had induced Jordan to keep the blast-furnace, and to set up steel-works and forges, he knew that he had Delaveau for his enemy. The blow had fallen heavily on the latter, who had hoped to buy La Crêcherie for a small sum, on long time to meet the payments, and who had instead seen it pass into the hands of a rash experimentalist, full of intelligence and activity, who wanted to turn the world upside down, and who had such creative vigor that he had begun his career by making an embryo city

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spring out of the ground. Nevertheless, after his first anger and his first surprise, Delaveau recovered confidence. He confined himself to the manufacture of shells and guns, where his profits were large, and in which he feared no competition. The announcement that the rival works were going to undertake rails and structural steel filled him at first with ironical satisfaction, for he did not know of the proposed new exploitation of the mine. Then when he understood how much might be made of the inferior ore, chemically treated, he behaved like an accomplished actor. He told every one who would listen to him that there was room enough in the world for every kind of industry, and that he was quite willing to leave rails and structural steel to his fortunate neighbor, if he would leave him his shells and guns. So peace was not disturbed in appearance, and relations continued cold and polite. But in Delaveau's heart there was a smothered anxiety for fear of this furnace of free and just labor so near his Pit, the flames from which might reach his halls and laborers. Besides, there was another thing that troubled him—a feeling that he would not put into words; he sometimes thought his old scaffoldings were cracking under him, that there were causes of decay that he had no power to arrest, and that whenever the aid of capital should fail him everything might crumble into dust, and that his own strong arms would not be able to prevent the ruin.

In the inevitable war which day by day went on between the Pit and La Crêcherie, and which might end in the destruction of one or the other, Luc was not moved by any pity for the Delaveaus. If he felt esteem for the man when he saw him so assiduously at work, so courageous in defending his opinions, he despised the woman Fernande; he even regarded her with a sort of terror when he began to perceive the terrible strength for destruction born in her of corruption. The discreditable situation in which he had detected her at Guerdache, her imperious conquest of poor Boisgelin, a handsome man whose fortune was about to melt away in the hands of so greedy a coadjutrix, filled him with an ever-increasing solicitude

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as he looked forward to tragedies in the future. It was the good and gentle Suzanne who called forth his anxious tenderness, for she would be the victim, the only person whom he pitied in that rotten household, which before long was sure to crumble into ruin. He had given up visiting her; though his intercourse with her had been dear to his heart, he never went to Guerdache; he merely knew how things went on there by reports that were brought to him by chance. All seemed to be going from bad to worse; the foolish exactions of Fernande seemed to increase, while Suzanne seemed to find nothing to oppose to them but silence. She was forced to shut her eyes for fear of a public scandal. One day Luc met her in one of the streets of Beauclair, holding her little Paul by the hand. She gave him a long look, in which he read her sorrow and the regard she felt for him, notwithstanding the fatal struggle which necessarily separated their two lives.

Therefore, as soon as Luc recognized Fauchard, he stood on the defensive, for he was anxious to avoid any collision with the Pit. He was willing to accept any workmen who came to him of their own accord from the rival works, but was unwilling to hold out any inducements to attract them. The workmen made their own decision. And as Bonnaire had spoken to him about Fauchard several times, he imagined that the latter had come to seek employment with him.

"Ah! there you are, my friend," he said. "Have you come to see if your old comrades can find a place for you?"

The man whose life-work it had been to draw crucibles out of the furnace was bewildered. He grew doubtful as to what he was there for. He was unable to make any decision, and began to stammer incoherently. Any new thing alarmed him; he was like a trained horse in a riding-school. The initiative in him had been so completely blunted that, aside from his usual gesture, he did not know how to act, filled as he was with childish terror. The new works and the great halls, clean and light, seem-

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ed to him something that he ought to fear, a place where he could not exist. And all he felt was eagerness to get back to his dark and dismal hell. Ragu had chaffed him. What was the use of changing his employers if nothing was certain? Then, perhaps, he vaguely felt that the time when he could have changed his life had passed away.

"No—no, monsieur; not yet. I should like to—but I don't know. . . . I will see about it later. I will consult my wife. . . ."

Luc smiled.

"That's right, that's right. A wife should always be consulted. . . . Good-bye, my friend."

And Fauchard went off awkwardly, astonished at the way his visit had turned out, for he had undoubtedly come there with the intention of asking for work, and the place pleased him, and he saw that he could make more there than he did at the Pit. So why did he hurry away, bewildered by what he had seen, as if it were something too good for him, anxious only to take refuge in the work he was accustomed to, and to sink back into the deep apathy of the poverty he had been bred in?

Luc stayed talking to Bonnaire for a moment about an improvement that he wanted to make in the rolling-mills; but Ragu had something to ask of him.

"Monsieur Luc, a high wind has again broken three panes of glass in our bedroom window, and this time I give you warning that we will not pay to have them repaired. . . . It is because our house is the first to feel a gale of wind when it blows from the plain. We are freezing."

Ragu was always grumbling. He always found something to be dissatisfied about.

"It is all simple enough, Monsieur Luc. You only have to call at our house to see how it is. Josine will show you what's the matter."

Since Ragu had become one of the workmen at La Crêcherie, Sœurette had persuaded him to marry Josine, and the young couple occupied one of the little houses in the industrial town, between that of Bonnaire and that

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of Bourron. Up to that time, since Ragu seemed to have turned over a new leaf, thanks to his improved surroundings, the relations between husband and wife had not been greatly troubled. There had been a few quarrels, principally on account of Nanet, who lived with them. But when Josine had cause to weep she always shut the window that nobody might hear her sobs.

A shadow passed over Luc's face, clouding the joy he always felt when he visited his workshops in the morning.

"All right, Ragu," he said, quietly, "I will come round to your house presently."

Here their conversation ended, for the rolling-mills were again started and their noise made it impossible for the human voice to be heard. Again the dazzling ingots passed, repassed, becoming elongated at every travel, and finally becoming rails. Rails were incessantly added to rails, until it seemed as if the whole earth was soon to be furrowed with them, in order to carry victorious life, increased tenfold, to infinity.

Luc looked on a little longer at the good work, smiling at Bonnaire and encouraging Ragu and Bourron, as if he had been one of themselves, trying to sow the seeds of kindly feeling between employer and employed, as he spoke to each gang of workmen; for he was convinced that nothing can be satisfactorily accomplished without mutual kind feeling and personal regard. Then he left the workshops and went to the club-house, as he did every morning, in order to look in at the schools. Although in the workshops he delighted to dream of future peace, he had still more satisfaction in the pleasures of hope as he stood among the children, the future men and women of his world.

Of course, the club-house was thus far only a vast building, clean and bright, the great object having been to afford as much accommodation at as little expense as possible. The schools occupied one wing, in another was the library, the hall for games, and the bath-rooms, while the great hall for meetings and exhibitions, together with certain offices, occupied the centre of the building. The

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schools were divided into three distinct sections — a *crèche* for the infants, where working mothers might leave their little ones—even those in swaddling clothes; a school, properly so-called, comprising five divisions, which gave complete instruction; and a series of apprentice workshops, open to the pupils of the five classes, as well as to those who were learning various trades, so that as they acquired general knowledge they also learned handicrafts. The two sexes were not kept apart; boys and girls grew up together from the time they lay side by side in their cradles until they ended their term of instruction in the workshops, which they left only to be married. They passed through the same classes, just as they would in real life, and sat on the same benches. To separate the sexes, to give them different instruction, to bring them up ignorant of each other—is not that the way to make them enemies; to pervert and to debase their natural attraction for each other; to make men too bold, and women too coy, because they perpetually misunderstood each other? Peace between them will never be made until they find a common interest as comrades, knowing each other, as those who have imbibed life from the same springs, working together, as those who are to confront life logically, healthfully, and as it ought to be.

Sœurette had been of great assistance to Luc in organizing the schools. While Jordan shut himself up in his laboratory, after having given Luc the money that he had promised him, he refused to look over the accounts, or even to be consulted on what was to be done, but his sister was passionately interested in this new town, which she had seen begun, and which was now growing under her eyes. There had always been in her a maternal instinct for the care of children, for teaching them, and for nursing the suffering; and her charity, which up to that time had been able to succor only a few among the poor pointed out to her by Abbé Merle, Dr. Novarre, or Hermeline the schoolmaster, suddenly seemed to have its sphere enlarged. She had a large family on her hands; laboring people to instruct, guide, and love—a present from Luc, as it were.

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Therefore, from the first moment she had chosen her work, not declining to take an interest in the organization of the classes and workshops for training in manual labor, but principally occupying herself with the *crèche,* where she would pass her mornings delighting in the love borne her by the little children. When any one suggested to her to get married, she would answer, with a little embarrassment, but with the pleasant laugh of a woman who knows she is not beautiful: "Have I not plenty of other people's children?" She had found an assistant in Josine, who, though she had married Ragu, was still childless. Every morning she found employment for her at the *crèche,* among the cradles. They had become friends, notwithstanding their different natures, being drawn together by the care both took of the charming little dears.

But this morning, when Luc went into the bright white room, he found Sœurette alone.

"Josine has not come to-day," said she. "She sent word that she was indisposed—nothing very serious, apparently."

Luc felt a vague suspicion, and his brow was again clouded. He said, simply:

"I have to pass by her house, and will see whether she has need of anything."

Before he left, however, he had the pleasure of seeing all the babies in their cradles. In the great white room they lay all in white, their cradles standing in a row along the white walls. Their little pink faces were smiling as they slept. There were kind-hearted women there, with long white aprons, tender eyes, and maternal hands, who watched with gentle words over all this infancy, over these germs of humanity, still so frail, and yet upon whom the future was to depend. But there were other and larger children, already beginning to be little men and women, three and four years old, and these were left at liberty, the weaker in rolling-chairs, the others tottering on their chubby legs, not without many falls. The hall opened on a veranda decked with flowers, leading to a garden. A troop of little darlings was basking in

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the sunshine and warm air. Playthings, such as jumping-jacks, were hung from strings to amuse the little ones, while the bigger children had dolls, horses, and carts which they dragged about with considerable noise, like heroes in whom was awakened the necessity for action. It was delightful to see all these little people growing up in this way, so merry, and in such welfare for the work of the morrow.

"Are none of them sick?" asked Luc, delightedly, lingering in this bright place.

"Oh no! They are all merry this morning," answered Sœurette. "There were two children attacked with measles the day before yesterday, and I would not receive them. They had to be isolated."

Luc and Sœurette had gone out together on the veranda, which led them towards the next school. The glass doors of the five classes succeeded one another, and all looked out upon the verdure of the garden. As the weather was warm they were wide open, and so Luc and Sœurette could look in from the outside, without entering the halls.

The masters, since the schools had been established, had elaborated a new programme. In the first school they took only children who did not know how to read. When a pupil had passed through the fifth school they gave him up, having imparted to him such elements of general knowledge as would be of use to him in life. They tried especially to familiarize him with facts and things, that he might understand what was real in the world. They also endeavored to awaken in him a sense of order, and, by daily experience, to make him learn the value of method. Without method there can be no useful work. It is method which classifies, which enables us to accumulate knowledge without losing what we have already acquired. And learning from books was, if not exactly set aside, relegated to a place of less importance than in most schools, for a child learns thoroughly only what he can see, what he can touch, and what he can understand. They did not oblige him to bend slavishly over incomprehensible dogmas, they did not make him dread the person and

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tyranny of his teacher. He was encouraged to discover truth for himself, to understand it, and to make it his own. There is no other way in which we can train boys into men; the individual energy of each child was awakened and employed in the work of his own instruction. They had also given up the system of rewards and punishments; they did not have recourse to threats or caresses to make the lazy work, since none were lazy. There were occasionally sick children, and children who did not understand what had been badly explained to them, or children into whose brains it had been the custom to pound knowledge with a ferule, for which they were not prepared. It was enough, since these schools desired to have only good pupils, to utilize the great desire to know which glows in every human heart, the inextinguishable curiosity a child feels about everything around him, so that he is always tiring grown people with his questions. Instruction ceased to be a torture, and became a constantly renewed pleasure as soon as it was made attractive. The teachers tried to stimulate the intelligence of the children, and to direct them to make fresh discoveries, for every one has the duty and the right to inform himself. They thought that the child ought to do this, that he ought to be left unobstructed in the midst of the vast world, in which he would some day take his place as a man. Thus trained he would have energy for action, and a power of will by which he would be directed how to act and to decide.

This was how the five classes, one after the other, went on. They gave notions to begin with, then scientific truths were acquired by a logical and gradual emancipation of the intellectual faculties. In the garden a gymnasium had been established, games and all physical exercises were encouraged, that the bodies of the children might be strengthened, and grow healthy and robust, while the brain was left to develop itself, and to be enriched without being conscious of how it acquired its riches. A good mental balance is never to be found except in a healthy body. In the lower classes especially the time for recre-

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ation was long. A beginning was made by requiring no tasks of the children but such as were short, varied, and in proportion to their endurance. The rule was to confine them as little as possible. Lessons were very often given in the open air. Walks were planned, which instructed the children when they saw things about which it was well that they should know; they were taken to manufactories; they were shown the marvellous works of nature; they saw animals, plants, mountains, and rivers; their best instruction came from life itself, for their teachers were persuaded that the ultimate purpose of all science ought to be to teach how life should be lived; so they tried to give their pupils, besides general notions of things, the idea of human brotherhood—the common brotherhood of men. The children grew up together and they all lived together. Love was the bond of their union, of justice, and of happiness. It was the indispensable bond among them. If they loved one another, it was thought that peace would reign among them. This love, beginning in family affection, would extend to the fatherland, and thence to all mankind, and it would be the sole law in the happy city of the future. It was cultivated in the children by interesting them in one another. The strong watched over the weak. All had their games in common, their studies, and their nascent passions. There was to be a future harvest, men strong by reason of bodily exercise, educated to understand the processes of nature, drawn closely to one another by heart and intelligence — because they were brothers! There was laughter and loud shouting, and Luc felt some anxiety, since things did not always go on quite smoothly among the children. In the middle of one of the classes he had just seen Nanet on his feet, and judged that he was the cause of the commotion.

"Is Nanet always giving you trouble?" he asked Sœurette. "That child is a little devil."

She smiled, and made a gesture that indicated an excuse for him.

"Yes," she said, "he is not always well behaved; but we have others who are much more unruly. They push

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one another, they fight, and they won't obey. But all the same they are pretty good boys. Nanet is an interesting urchin, very brave and very loving. . . . Besides, when they are all too quiet we get anxious, and fancy that they must be ill."

After the class-rooms came the apprentice shops, on the other side of the garden. Lectures had been given therein on the various handicrafts, and the children were instructed in the latter, less to make them expert than to give them general ideas on the subject, and to determine their vocation. These classes were carried on in connection with the courses of studies. After the children had acquired the first notions about reading and writing, tools were put into their hands, and if in the morning a child had diligently studied his grammar, arithmetic, and history, matters belonging to his intellect, he was in the afternoon employed in what gave skill and vigor to his muscles. It was like a useful recreation, a rest for the brain, a joyous interchange of activity. The principle had been adopted that every man ought to know some kind of handicraft, so that every pupil, when he left the schools, had only to select whatever trade he preferred, and perfect himself therein in a workshop. Nor was the beautiful neglected. The children took courses in music, drawing, painting, and sculpture, in which, in some souls, were born the joys of existence. Even those who never got beyond the first elements of education felt the world enlarged; the whole earth had a real interest for them; the most humble lives were brightened by a new radiance. In the garden, at the close of a fine day, when the sun was setting in splendor, the children would be called together, and made to sing verses about peace and glory. They were trained to rejoice in spectacles of immortal truth and immortal beauty.

Luc was ending his daily visit to the schools when some one came running to tell him that two peasants from Combettes, Lenfant and Yvonnot, wanted to see him. They had been shown into the little office which opened on the great hall.

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"Have they come about that matter of the brook?" asked Sœurette.

"Yes," answered he. "They are the two men who asked me for an interview. But I wish to see them more than they do me, for I was talking the other day with Feuillat, and am convinced that an understanding must be reached between La Crêcherie and Combettes, if we hope to conquer."

She listened smilingly to what he said, for she knew perfectly all his plans as founder of a town, and after she had shaken hands with him she turned back with her quiet step to her white cradles, whence would proceed the future people needed to materialize her dream.

Feuillat, the farmer of Guerdache, had renewed his lease with Boisgelin under conditions that were disastrous to both parties. It was necessary to live, he said, and the farming system had become so defective that it was impossible for it to give good results any longer. The soil was thoroughly impoverished. So Feuillat secretly, like an obstinate man haunted by an idea that he communicated to no one, continued to promote experimental work that he would have liked to have seen tried on his farm, and also to promote the reconciliation of the peasants of Combettes, estranged by ancient hatreds, also the union of their parcels of land, divided to infinity, and the creation of one vast domain whence might be derived great wealth. And his idea must have been that if the experiment proved a success he would try to persuade Boisgelin to allow his farm to enter the new association. If he refused, things would end by his being forced to do so. Moreover, in this taciturn Feuillat, bowed under inevitable servitude, there was something of a wily and patient apostle, resolved never to give up, but to win step by step. His first success had just been to make peace between Lenfant and Yvonnot, whose families had been quarrelling for centuries. The first having been chosen as mayor by the commune, and the second as his deputy, he had given them to understand that they were both masters whenever they agreed to act together.

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Then he had slowly led them to his idea of a general good understanding which would enable the commune to get out of the disastrous rut in which it was struggling, and find in the land a source of inexhaustible wealth. Just at that time La Crêcherie was founded, and he gave it as an example, and told of its increasing prosperity. He had even succeeded in putting Lenfant and Yvonnot in communication with Luc, by taking advantage of a question of water to be regulated between Combettes and La Crêcherie. That was why the mayor and his deputy were at the works that morning.

Luc at once granted them what they came to ask, with a cordiality which conquered their habitual mistrust.

"It is understood, gentlemen, that La Crêcherie will hereafter lay pipes for all the spring water that it has impounded, and will empty all that it does not use into the Saint Jean brook, which runs across your commune before it joins the Mionne. With very little expense, you can build reservoirs, and have every facility for irrigation, and thus triple the value of your land."

Lenfant, short and stout, shook his big head with an air of slow reflection, and said:

"But that will cost too much money."

Yvonnot, who was small and slender, cried:

"But, monsieur, what troubles us is that the division of that water is going to be another reason for our fighting. No doubt you are a good neighbor to give it us, and we heartily thank you. But how shall we manage to let every one have his just share without his believing that the rest are robbing him?"

Luc smiled. He was glad to hear the question, because it would allow him to touch upon a subject of which his heart was full, and which made him glad to see them.

"But the water which makes things grow," he said, "ought to belong to everybody, like the sun, which gives us all warmth and light, like the soil itself, which brings forth and gives us food. The best way of dividing is not to divide at all, but to leave what nature gives us common to everybody."

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The two peasants understood, and remained silent for a moment, with their eyes upon the floor. Lenfant, the more thoughtful of the two, was the first to speak.

"Yes—yes, we know; the farmer at Guerdache has talked to us about that. . . . No doubt it is a good idea for all of us to agree, as you have done here, and to hold money, land, labor, and tools in common, and then divide the profits afterwards. . . . It seems certain that we should each get more, and be better off than we are now. . . . But all the same we should have to run risks, and I think we should have to talk it over a long time before we could convince the people at Combettes."

"Ah! of course we should," said Yvonnot, with an abrupt gesture. "We two, you understand, are nearly of one accord, and are not much opposed to novelties. . . . But we shall have to bring over the others, and that will be hard work, I warn you."

This was the mistrust of the peasants for any kind of social change that might possibly interfere with the ownership of property. This Luc knew well. He was expecting it, and continued to smile. For the peasant to give up the parcel of land so dear to him, and which had come down by descent from father to son, and to drown it, as it were, in the parcels of others—what a sacrifice! But the cruel sorrows, increasing day by day, and the exhaustion of the too much divided land, threw farmers into despair and disgust, and must have tended to convince them that there was no salvation possible, except in union, and in the agreement of an entire commune capable of creating a vast domain. Luc spoke, and proved to them that in future all success would be in association; that they must operate upon wide fields with powerful machines in order to plough them, scatter seed, and reap their harvests; they must have abundant fertilizers, chemically prepared in neighboring factories, and they must have constant irrigation, which would increase their profits tenfold. Though hitherto the hard labor of one peasant resulted only in famine, great riches would be the result if all the peasants in a village would agree to unite in cul-

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tivating the land on a large scale, and to have machines, fertilizers, and water in common. Then they would be able to recuperate the soil, which might be made marvellously fertile if it were cleared of stones, manured, and watered. It might even be eventually heated so there would be no more seasons. Two acres would suffice to feed two or three families. Already on land cultivated under this system the soil had produced miracles—an uninterrupted succession of vegetables and fruits. The population of France might be multiplied threefold; the soil would nourish it abundantly if it were systematically cultivated, in the harmony of all the creative forces. And then there would be happiness for all, three times less hard labor, the peasant would be finally freed from his ancient servitude, and delivered from the money-lender who preyed upon him, as well as set free from the fear of being crushed by large landed proprietors and by the state.

"That is too good to be possible," said Lenfant, with his air of reflection.

But Yvonnot became excited more quickly.

"Ah!—bless me!—if that were only so, what fools we should be not to try the thing!"

"Just see what we ourselves are doing at La Crêcherie," said Luc, who had been holding this argument in reserve as an example. "We have been scarcely three years in operation, and our business has prospered; all our workmen who have joined our association have meat to eat, wine to drink, and are no longer in debt, nor in dread of want in the future. Ask them, and come and look over what we are doing; see our works, our houses, our Communal House, all we have built and created in so short a time. . . . It is all done by our union. You could accomplish wonderful things if you followed our example."

"Yes—yes; we have seen; we know," responded the two peasants.

And that was true. They had visited La Crêcherie with curiosity before they asked for Luc. They had made no remarks on the prosperity they had observed, but

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were astonished at what they had seen of the happy town, which was growing so rapidly, and they asked themselves whether it might not be a good thing for them to enter into a similar association. The force of experience had made its way into them, and was subduing their opposition by degrees.

"Well, then, since you know all about it, the thing is very simple," said Luc, cheerfully. "We want bread; our workpeople cannot live if you do not grow grain to make it for them. You, on your part, want tools, spades, ploughs, and all kinds of things made of steel and iron, such as we can furnish you. The solution of the problem is easy enough; we have only to come to an understanding. We will give you steel, you shall give us breadstuffs, and so we will work together, and live happily hereafter. Since we are near neighbors, and your land lies close to our works, and we naturally need each other, is it not best that we should live like brothers, and combine for each others' good, as if we were one family?"

His cordiality had its effect on Lenfant and on Yvonnot. Never had a reconciliation between peasant and manufacturer been brought about so satisfactorily. Ever since La Crêcherie had been at work, and been going on rapidly, Luc had nourished a secret wish to combine all the smaller factories in his association—all the various little industries which depended on his workshops and had grown up around them. La Crêcherie was a centre, producing raw material—that is, steel—which was needed in a whole multitude of manufactures. Chodorge's factory made nails, and Miranda's made agricultural machinery; there was even a man named Hordoir, an old forgeman, who had two hammers still in operation, worked by a torrent in a gorge of the Monts Bleuses. All these would be forced some day, if they desired to live, to join their brethren in La Crêcherie, without which they could not exist. Even masons and bricklayers, garment-makers, and the shoemakers employed by Mayor Gourier would, in the end, be absorbed, and come to an understanding with La Crêcherie, and would give houses and coats and shoes

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in exchange for tools and breadstuffs. The future city could be realized only by this universal association, this communion of labor.

"Well, then, Monsieur Luc," said Lenfant, very wisely, "these things are too big to be decided all at once. But we promise you we will think them over, and do all we can to induce Combettes to come to a good understanding, such as you have here."

"Yes, that's it, Monsieur Luc," added Yvonnot. "Since we have gone so far as to become reconciled—Lenfant and I—we may as well make it our business to get others to become friends, as we have done, and Feuillat, who is a smart chap, will help us."

As they were leaving they again alluded to the water that Luc promised to empty into the Grand Jean. All was settled. They fancied that they should be much assisted in the plan for association by this matter of fresh water, which would oblige all the inhabitants of the commune to have one interest and one will.

Luc, who went with them, took them through the garden, where their children, Arsène and Olympe, Eugénie and Nicolas, were waiting for them. Their fathers had brought them that they might see La Crêcherie, which all the country was talking about. It so happened that all the scholars of the five classes had just come forth for recreation, and filled the garden with noise and joyous merriment. The little girls' skirts were blown about by the fresh air in the sunshine, the boys leaped about like kids; there was laughter, shouting, and singing, all the noise, indeed, that happy children love to make in the midst of soft turf and green foliage.

But Luc observed that Sœurette was not pleased; she was even scolding. She was standing in the midst of a group of dark and fair heads. Foremost stood Nanet, who had grown, being now almost ten years old, with his round, bold, happy face and his fleece of tousled hair, the color of ripe barley. Behind him were grouped the four Bonnaires, Lucien, Antoinette, Zoé, and Severin, and the two Bourron children, Sébastien and Marthe, all of them, no

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doubt, in disgrace, from the youngest, who was about five, to the older ones, who were nearly ten. It seemed as if Nanet had been foremost among them in some mischief, since he answered and argued, like a little urchin not easily put down, and insisted that he had done nothing wrong.

"What's the matter?" said Luc.

"Oh! it is Nanet again," said Sœurette; "he went over yonder to the Pit, though I had expressly forbidden him. I have just heard that yesterday he took all these other children with him, and that they even scrambled over the wall."

In fact, at one corner of the land belonging to La Crêcherie there was a low wall which separated it from land belonging to the Pit. There was also an old door that opened from a corner of it into the garden of Delaveau. It was only bolted, but since all intercourse had ceased between the Pit and La Crêcherie the bolt had never been drawn.

Nanet protested vehemently.

"It is not true that we all got over the wall. I got over it by myself, and I opened the door for the others."

Luc, who was not pleased, grew angry.

"You know very well," he said, "that you have been forbidden more than ten times to go there. You will end by bringing us all into great trouble. I tell you, and I tell the other children, that it was very naughty—very naughty, indeed."

Nanet listened with wide-open eyes. He was sorry to have caused Monsieur Luc annoyance, for he was a good little fellow, after all; but he did not understand the situation. He had climbed over the wall and let the other children into M. Delaveau's garden, because Nise Delaveau that afternoon had had some other children, Paul Boisgelin, Louise Mazelle, and a lot of other little *bourgeois,* who were very amusing, and they had all had a good time playing together. He said that Nise Delaveau was a very nice little girl.

"Why was it so naughty?" he repeated, with an aston-

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ished air. "We did not hurt any one; we had a good time playing together."

And he told how they found children there, and gave a true account of all that they had done and of the playthings. He told how they had not hurt the flowers, nor thrown stones upon the flower-beds.

"Nise is very good to us," said he at last. "She is very fond of me, and I have been fond of her ever since that day we played together."

Luc tried not to smile, but his heart was moved, and a vision rose before him of these two children, born in different walks of life, fraternizing under the trees, playing and laughing together, unconscious of the hatred and the rivalry which existed between their fathers. Would the future peace of the town flourish under such as they?

"I dare say," said he, "that Nise is charming, and that you all get along well together; but you must understand that she ought to stay on her own grounds and you ought to stay on yours, so that no one may have any cause to complain of you."

Sœurette, under the influence of this infantine innocence, looked at them with no signs of displeasure in her eyes. She forgave them in her heart, and said, gently:

"Come, my little ones, I know you will not do it again, because if you do we shall be sorry."

When Lenfant and Yvonnot at last took leave, and carried off Arsène and Olympe, Eugénie and Nicolas, who had taken part in the games, and who left with great regret, Luc thought of going home, his day's visit to La Crêcherie being over. But he remembered that he had first promised to see Josine, and he resolved to go round by her house before returning to his own. His morning had been a pleasant one, and he was going home with his heart throbbing with hope. In the first place, that day the club-house, with its glazed tiles and the few ornaments that decorated it, had given him a cheerful impression of prosperity, as he saw it in the brightness of a sunny day. The workshops were all busy, the stores began to be full to overflowing with provisions.

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Then, too, he nourished the hope of seeing the peasants of Combettes form an association, increase their experience, and secure a triumph, giving breadstuffs in exchange for tools and machines. It was also a sight which gave cheerful promise for the future to see the schools, to see the garden so joyous with its flock of little children, who, before long, would be the men and women of the future town. And now, as he walked through its rising street, he saw little white houses springing up everywhere in plots of verdure. He had in him the spirit of a constructor, and he experienced fresh pleasure as he saw each new building added to the rest, and enlarging this town that he had begun to build but yesterday. Had he not found his mission? These things, these beings, were they not to rise up and gather themselves together at his will? He felt strong enough to make the very stones rise up at his word, and become human dwellings and public edifices, in which truth, justice, and fraternity should find a home. Of course, he was at present only sowing the seed; he was only laying a foundation; he was proceeding cautiously at the beginning. But on certain unhappy days he had a vision of his future city, and his heart seemed to sing within him.

The house occupied by Ragu and Josine, which had been one of the first built, was near the park of La Crêcherie. It stood between the houses of Bonnaire and Bourron. As Luc went up the street, he saw in the distance, at an angle of the sidewalk, a group of gossips, talking with great animation, and soon recognized among them Madame Bonnaire and Madame Bourron, who seemed to be holding forth to Madame Fauchard, who, like her husband, had come over to La Crêcherie that morning to see if the new works were the Land of Cockaigne—the Utopia that people were talking about. With her sharp voice and her stiff gestures, Madame Bonnaire, "La Toupe," as her neighbors still called her, did not embellish the scene. Always dissatisfied, always out of humor with her surroundings, and never happy, she ruined her own life and spoiled the peace of others. She had at

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first seemed glad that her husband had found employment at La Crêcherie; but after having dreamed of a large share in the profits, she grew angry at the prospect of having to wait some time for the realization of her dream; and her great grievance was that she had not as yet been able to buy herself a watch, which she had coveted for many years. Babette Bourron, on the contrary, was constantly delighted, and had much to say as to the advantages of her residence at La Crêcherie, being especially glad that her husband no longer came home tipsy at night with Ragu. And between the two stood Madame Fauchard, thinner, sadder, and more dolorous than ever. She stood perplexed, rather inclined to think, with La Toupe, that all was going to rack and ruin, so thoroughly was she convinced that there could be no happiness for her in this world.

The sight of La Toupe and the wife of Fauchard gossiping together with an air of discontent was disagreeable to Luc. His happy frame of mind was spoiled, for he was quite aware of the trouble that women were likely to make in the future organization of labor, justice, and fraternity. They were all-powerful. It was by them, and for them, that he had hoped to found his town, and his courage weakened when he met with women opposed to his views, bad women, or women merely obstructive, who instead of giving him the help he had expected, might become the destructive element that would destroy everything. He passed the group of gossips with a bow, while the women ceased their conversation with anxious faces, as if they had been caught doing something wrong.

When Luc went into the little house where Ragu and his wife lived, he found Josine sitting sewing by an open window. But her work had fallen on her lap, and she was lost in so deep a reverie that she did not hear him enter. Her eyes were far away. For a moment he stood still and looked at her. She was no longer a poor girl wandering about the streets, hungry and ill-clad, with a pinched face, expressive of suffering, framed by her loose hair. She was now twenty-one. She was charming in

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her simple frock of blue calico. Her figure was slight and supple, but no longer thin. And her beautiful chestnut hair, as soft as silk, set off her charming face, not quite so round as formerly, and her laughing blue eyes. She had a little mouth, and her complexion was like a rose. She sat there among her habitual surroundings, in her dining-room, so clean, so neat, so cheerful, furnished with varnished pine wood. It was her favorite sitting-room in the little house which she had entered so happily as its mistress, which for three years she had taken so much pleasure in adorning and caring for.

What was Josine thinking about, with her pale face so very sad? After Bonnaire had persuaded Ragu to come with him and join the association of workmen at La Crêcherie, she had fancied herself released from all her troubles. Thenceforward she would have a charming little house of her own, enough to live on, and Ragu would reform as soon as he had no more vexations in the works; and her hopes of good fortune had not been disappointed. Ragu had married her by the especial desire of Sœurette, though she did not experience that happiness in her marriage that she should have done had it taken place earlier in their relations. She did not even accept Ragu until she had consulted Luc, whom she looked up to as her god, her savior, her master; and in his heart he smothered, under feelings of holy joy, the throb of anguish he experienced when she asked for his permission; there was one moment of sharp pain and then he gave his consent. For was it not the best possible solution of her situation? She could marry no man but Ragu, and now he wished to marry her. Luc felt that he ought to be glad for her sake, and he felt the same regard for her after her marriage as he had done before, always greeting her with a smile whenever they met, as if he wished to ask if she were happy. And she felt his smile in the depths of her poor heart, which was breaking for lack of love and tenderness.

Josine felt a slight chill, as she sat wrapped in sad thoughts, as if something in the air had startled her. She

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turned and saw Luc, who was smiling in his usual affectionate, but not quite natural, way.

"My dear girl," said he, "I am here because Ragu tells me that you are very uncomfortable in this house; that it is exposed to every blast that sweeps over the plain, and that the wind has broken three panes in the window of your bedroom."

She heard him with a look of confusion and surprise; she did not like to contradict her husband, nor did she like to tell him a lie.

"Yes, Monsieur Luc," she said, "one of the panes is broken, but I am not sure that the wind did it. It is true that when the wind blows over the plain we get our full share of it."

Her voice trembled. She could not prevent two big tears from rolling down her cheeks. It was Ragu who, in a fit of rage, had broken the window-panes, in an effort to throw everything out-of-doors.

"How is this, Josine; are you crying? Let us see; speak; tell me everything. You know I am your friend."

And he seated himself near her, much moved, for he took his part in her sorrow. But she had dried her tears.

"No, no," she said; "it is nothing. I beg your pardon. You find me at an unfortunate moment, when I am disposed to be unreasonable and sorrowful."

She struggled in vain; at last he heard her confession. Ragu was not becoming accustomed to a life of order, peace, and slow, continual effort to attain a more comfortable livelihood. He seemed to have a yearning for the wretchedness and suffering in which he had lived as a wage-earner, grumbling at his employer, but accustomed to his state of slavery, finding consolation for it all at the *cabaret,* in drunkenness and in an outpouring of impotent words. He regretted the old dark and dirty workshops, the underhanded war with his foreman, the noisy bouts with his fellow-workmen, all those abominable days of hatred that ended at home in beating wife and children. So, having begun with pleasantries, he ended with accusa-

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tions. He called La Crêcherie a great barracks, a prison, in which there was no longer any liberty, not even that of drinking a drop too much if a man chose to do so. Up to the present time workmen there were earning no more than they did at the Pit, and had all sorts of anxieties. They worried lest the thing might not prove a success, or lest nothing should be coming to them on the day when the profits were divided. For two months past very unpleasant rumors had been rife about it. It was said that that year it would be necessary to "tighten the belt," because of the purchase of new machinery. Then, again, the co-operative stores sometimes did not work satisfactorily. They would occasionally send you potatoes when you had ordered kerosene, or else they would forget you, and you might have to go three or four times to the store before you got what you wanted. In this manner Ragu sometimes sneered and sometimes raged at La Crêcherie. He called it a beastly barracks, from which he hoped to escape just as soon as he could.

There was a painful silence when Josine had told Luc this. He became gloomy, for he knew that there was some truth at the bottom of it all. There were always inevitable grindings in a machine that was still new. And especially the rumors afloat about the difficulties of the present year had all the more effect upon Luc because he was growing apprehensive that he might have to ask his workmen to make certain sacrifices, so that he might not compromise the prosperity of the undertaking.

"And Bourron complains like Ragu, does he not?" he asked. "But you have never heard Bonnaire?"

Josine had answered in the negative by a sign of her head, when through the open window were heard the voices of the three women, who were standing on the sidewalk. It was La Toupe, who was snarling like a crazy woman at La Crêcherie, impelled by her propensity to bite and rage. Although Bonnaire said nothing, being a reasonable man, whose good sense led him to await the result of the experiment, his wife's tongue sufficed to stir up all the gossiping women in the rising town. And Luc

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heard her making Fauchard's wife unhappy by announcing the impending ruin of La Crêcherie.

"So, then, Josine," said Luc, speaking slowly, "you are not happy?"

Again she wanted to protest.

"Oh! Monsieur Luc, how could I be anything but happy, when you have done so much for me?"

But her strength failed her, and two big tears gathered in her eyes and rolled down her cheeks.

"Now, you see, Josine, that you are not happy."

"I am not happy, it is true, Monsieur Luc; but there is nothing that you can do about it; it is not your fault. You have been like a providence to me; but what can be done if nothing occurs to change the heart of that unfortunate fellow? . . . He is going to the bad again. He can no longer bear Nanet; he came near breaking up all our things last evening; and he beat me because he said that the boy did not come up to his expectations. . . . Don't trouble yourself about me, Monsieur Luc. These things are my own affair. I promise you to let them give me as little pain as possible."

Her voice was interrupted by sobs, and was tremulous and almost indistinct. And he, powerless, felt that he was growing sadder and sadder.

His happy morning had passed under a cloud. He was chilled by a sudden blast of doubt and despair. He had been so brave. His cheerful, hopeful spirit had given him strength. When things were going well, when material success seemed assured, he had thought he would be able to change men, to develop divine love in their hearts, the fecund plant of which the flower is kindliness and a sympathetic interest in the concerns of others. But if men remained in a state of hatred and violence, his work would not be accomplished; how could tenderness be awakened in them, how could happiness be taught them? That dear Josine, whom he had rescued out of such a depth of ruin, whom he had saved from such frightful destitution, was to him the very type of his whole work. So long as Josine was not happy, his work would not be accomplished.

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She was the woman, the wretched woman, the slave, the victim of toil, or lust, whose savior he had dreamed to be. It was especially by her, and for her, her among all women, that the future city would be built. And if Josine was still unhappy, it was because there was nothing solid as yet, because nothing had been established, because everything remained to be done. In his vexation he foresaw sorrowful days, and had a presentiment that a terrible struggle was going to take place between the past and the future, and that he himself would shed both tears and blood therein.

"Don't cry, Josine," said he; "be courageous, and I swear to you that you shall yet be happy, because it is necessary you should, in order that everybody may be happy."

He said this so gently that at last she smiled.

"Oh! I am courageous, Monsieur Luc. I well know that you will not abandon me, and that your work will come out all right, since you are all kindness and courage. I will wait, I assure you, even if I have to wait all my life."

It was like an engagement, an exchange of promises, in the hope of happiness to come. He was standing now, and had taken both her hands, which he was squeezing, while he felt that she was returning the pressure. For a few moments there was between them a union of tender feeling; what a blessed existence of joy and peace they might have led in that little dining-room, with its furniture of varnished spruce, so clean and cheerful-looking.

"Good-bye, Josine."

"Good-bye, Monsieur Luc."

After that, Luc walked homeward. As he went along the terrace, beneath which ran the road to Combettes, another meeting delayed him for some minutes. He had just perceived Monsieur Jérôme, in his wheeled chair, passing by the grounds of La Crêcherie, pushed by a manservant. This apparition recalled other times when he had observed this feeble old man in this same chair, especially the first time, when he had seen him passing by the

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Pit, and looking with his blue eyes at the noisy, smoky buildings of those works in which he had founded the fortune of the Qurignons. Now he was passing La Crêcherie, and was gazing, with the same blue eyes, which seemed vacant, at its new buildings, which looked so bright in the sunshine. Why, then, had he made his servant roll him to that spot, as if he wished thoroughly to examine them? Perhaps it was mere chance. He was out for an airing; perhaps it was only the caprice of a poor old man who had fallen into second childhood. As the servant wheeled the chair slowly onward, Monsieur Jérôme raised his broad face, with its large, regular features, encircled by long, white hair, and with a grave, impassive look, examined everything, every façade and every chimney, although he seemed hardly to notice them, as if he wished to understand what this new town was that was springing up so near the house which he himself had erected in the past.

But another incident occurred, and Luc felt his emotion increase.

Another old man, likewise infirm, and shambling along on swollen legs, was coming up the road towards the little wheeled chair. It was father Linot, a fat man with flabby, white flesh, whom the Bonnaires had kept under their roof, and who on fine days took short walks around the works. At first, as his eyes were weak, he did not recognize Monsieur Jérôme. Then he gave a start, drew back, and placed himself against the wall, as if the road was not wide enough for two, and, lifting his straw hat, he bowed low and saluted profoundly. It was to the ancestor of the Qurignons, the master-founder, that the first of the Ragus, a wage-earner and the father of wage-earners, was paying homage. Years and, back of him, centuries of labor, suffering, and wretchedness bowed in that trembling salute. At the passage of the master, as decrepit as he was, the old slave, who had the cowardice of ages of servitude in his blood, faltered and bowed down. Monsieur Jérôme, however, did not even see him, but passed on, looking like some stupid idol, as he went on

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examining the new workshops of La Crêcherie, and perhaps without seeing them.

Luc shuddered. What a past would have to be destroyed, and what ill weeds would have to be rooted up, all connected with the existence of this poor old man! He looked at his town, just rising from the earth, and felt with what difficulty and under what obstacles it would have to grow and prosper. Love alone, he thought, and the influence of women and children, would be able to overcome them.

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II

EVER since La Crêcherie had been founded, that is, for four years, an undercurrent of hatred against Luc had been growing strong in Beauclair. At first the feeling was only one of hostile astonishment, of ill-natured jokes about his enterprise; but afterwards, when the interests of Beauclair and La Crêcherie became complicated, anger took the place of pleasantry, and the old town felt the necessity of defending itself by any and all means against the common enemy.

It was the small tradespeople, the retail dealers, who first took the alarm. The co-operative stores in La Crêcherie, which they had made fun of when they were first opened, were succeeding, and, by slow degrees, not only the laborers from the works became their customers, but all those inhabitants of the town who joined the association. And it may easily be imagined that the old shopkeepers were much excited by this unexpected competition, and by the new scale of prices, which cut down the price of articles they sold one-third. It was a struggle in which they could not succeed; their ruin must shortly be accomplished if this miserable Luc should carry out his disastrous plans, and could persuade people that wealth must be more equitably divided, and that the poor ought to live better and cheaper in this world than they had hitherto done. The butchers, grocers, bakers, and vintners would be forced, if he went on, to close their shops, if their position as middlemen was to be attacked, for no profits would cling to their fingers. And they cried out that such new ideas were abominable, that they would overthrow the social system, and that this would take

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place on the day that they should be forced no longer to increase their profits through the wants of the poor.

But the most concerned were the Laboques, the hardware dealers, who had once carried round their stock to fairs, and who had now opened a sort of large bazaar at the corner of Rue de Brias and the Place de la Mairie. The price of hardware had gone down, ever since La Crêcherie had been making considerable quantities of it, and what was worse was that the idea of association was spreading to the little workshops in the neighborhood; the moment seemed to have arrived when buyers, without availing themselves of the stock in the store of Laboque, were purchasing at first-hand in the co-operative stores of La Crêcherie, the nails of Chodorge & Co., the scythes and spades of Hausser, the machines and agricultural implements of Miranda. Besides hardware, the stores in La Crêcherie furnished many other articles, and the business of the bazaar grew less and less every day. Consequently, the wrath of the Laboques did not diminish; they were exasperated by what they called the cutting down of prices; they thought themselves robbed as soon as they were prevented from getting their own profit out of the money and the labor of the working-classes. Their place became, naturally, the focus of hostility and opposition to Luc and La Crêcherie; on their hearth burned the fire of all the hatreds excited by the reforms of a man whose name was never spoken without some epithet of execration. Foremost among his enemies was Dacheux, the butcher, stammering with rage against his new reforms, and Caffiaux, the saloon-keeper, who, though less violent, was poisonously rancorous against him, but did not lose sight of his own interests. Even handsome Madame Mitaine, the baker's wife, sometimes deplored the loss of her customers, though she was always inclined to take a kindly view of things.

"Don't you know," screamed Laboque, "that this Monsieur Luc, as he calls himself, has one fixed idea at the bottom of his reforms? He wants to ruin us tradespeople. Yes, he is proud of it. He says openly—what is a

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most monstrous thing—that our retail business is mere theft, that we are all robbers, and that we ought to be put down. It was to make a clean sweep of us that he founded La Crêcherie."

Dacheux, with an inflamed face, listened to Laboque with great, round eyes.

"And, then, how are people to get food to eat, and clothes to wear, and all the rest of it?"

"Indeed! he says that the consumer must deal with the producer."

"How about the money?" asked the butcher.

"Money? Oh! he does away with money, too. There won't be any more money. Ha! Isn't that nonsense? As if people could live without money!"

And Dacheux became half choked with anger.

"No more trade! no more money! Why, he wants to destroy everything! And is there no prison for such a rascal? He will ruin Beauclair, if we don't look out!"

But Caffiaux gravely shook his head.

"He says a good many things besides. . . . He says, in the first place, that everybody ought to work. He would like to set up a *bagne,* where guards with clubs stood over all of us to see that we performed the tasks assigned to us. He says that there ought to be no more rich men and no more poor ones; that a man, when he dies, should have no more than he had when he was born; that people should earn what they eat, and that each one should earn no more than his neighbor, and should have no right to lay by money out of his savings."

"Well, then, what becomes of inheritance?" again broke in Dacheux.

"There is not to be any inheritance."

"What! no inheritance? Am I not to leave my money to my own daughter? Thunder and lightning! That's a little too much!"

Here the butcher shook the table with a violent blow of his fist.

"He says, too," continued Caffiaux, "that there ought to be no authority of any sort, no government, no gen-

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darmes, no more judges, no more prisons. Every one is to live as he likes, and eat and sleep as he likes. . . . He says that by-and-by machines will do all the work, and that all that workmen will have to do will be to run them. The world will be a kind of paradise, because no one will fight or quarrel; there will be no armies and no wars. . . . He says, also, that men and women, when they love each other, may come together for as long as they fancy the arrangement, and may then take up with somebody else. If there should be any children, the community will look after them, and bring them up wholesale, as it were, without any mother or father."

Madame Mitaine, who had till then been silent, now made a vehement protest.

"Oh! poor little things! . . . I should hope that every mother might have the right to care for her own children. It may do for children whose heartless parents have abandoned them to be brought up anyhow, by the hands of strangers in foundling hospitals or orphan asylums. . . . All you are saying does not seem to me in the least proper."

"You had better say it is pure rot," cried Dacheux, beside himself. "Why, it is what you may see any day in the streets. Their future society would be nothing better than a house of ill-fame!"

Here Laboque, who had not lost sight of the fact that his own interests were at stake, wound up the argument.

"Your Monsieur Luc is mad. We cannot let him ruin and dishonor Beauclair. We shall have to combine and act against him."

But anger grew greater still in Beauclair when it became known that the reforms at La Crêcherie had infected the neighboring village of Combettes. There was general amazement and indignation when they heard that Monsieur Luc had debauched and poisoned the minds of the peasants as well as of his workmen! That Lenfant, the mayor of Combettes, with the help of his colleague, Yvonnot, had drawn together and reconciled the four hundred inhabitants of the village, had persuaded them to

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hold all their land in common, and to draw up an agreement of association, like that which regulated capital, brain-work, and labor in the new works. There was to be, thenceforth, one vast domain at Combettes; all were to have the use of its machines and fertilizers; every man might make experiments in cultivation; harvests would be increased tenfold, and hopes were held out that there would be large profits to be shared. Besides this, the two associations were to be consolidated: the peasants were to furnish breadstuffs to the workpeople, who would give them in exchange tools and all other manufactured articles that they needed, so that the two classes, long opposed to each other, would by degrees be fused into each other, and the village and the works would form, as it were, the embryo of a fraternal people. Beauclair said that the old world would come to an end if socialism made its way among the peasantry—the great mass of cultivators of the soil, who had always been considered a barrier against any attack on personal property, men willing to perish on their own little plots of ground, which were inadequate to support them, rather than part with their land. The effect of this news ran through all Beauclair; there was a general shiver, which gave notice that some sort of catastrophe was at hand.

Here again the Laboques were the first people to feel the change. They lost their customers at Combettes. Lenfant — indeed, nobody came to buy spades, ploughshares, saucepans, and tools. In the last visit Lenfant paid them, he had tried to beat down their prices, and had ended by buying nothing, telling them bluntly that he could save thirty per cent. by not buying from them, as they were forced to make their profit on what they bought at the neighboring factories. From that day forward all the inhabitants of Combettes went to La Crêcherie, and became adherents of the co-operative stores, whose importance increased day by day, until they became a terror to all the little retail dealers in Beauclair.

"We must do something; we must act!" reiterated Laboque, with ever-increasing violence, when Dacheux

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and Caffiaux came to see him. "If we wait till this madman poisons all the country with his monstrous doctrines, we shall be too late!"

"What can we do?" asked the prudent Caffiaux.

Dacheux was for killing the man at once.

"Some one might wait for him some evening at a street corner, and let fly at him one of those little volleys which make a man reflect on what he has been about."

But Laboque, a small man, more cunning than Dacheux, preferred surer, quieter means for getting rid of him.

"No, no," he said; "all the town is up against him. We must make use of that feeling; we have every one on our side."

The opportunity was at hand. Old Beauclair for centuries had had a filthy rivulet running through it, a sort of open sewer. It was called the Clouque. Nobody knew where it came from; it seemed as if it had its origin in some old hovels built at the entrance to the ravines of Brias, and the common idea was that it might have been one of those mountain torrents whose source was still unknown. Very old people could remember to have seen it a full stream at certain seasons. But for many years it had rarely had any pure water; what it had was poisoned by the neighboring factories. The good women living on the river-bank had long used it as a natural sink, into which they emptied their slop-pails, so that it was choked with all kinds of filth from the poorer quarter of the town, and gave forth, especially in summer, a horrible smell. At one time there had been serious fears of an epidemic arising from this source, and the mayor and the municipal council had considered the question of covering it, that is, of putting it underground. But the expense seemed too great, and nothing more was said about it. The Clouque, undisturbed, continued to smell horribly, and to contaminate its neighborhood. Then, all of a sudden, it dried up completely, and became nothing more than a rocky pathway without one drop of water. Beauclair was delivered from this source of in-

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fection, as if by the wand of a magician. To the Clouque had been attributed the bad fevers that had long infested that part of the country; and the inhabitants of Beauclair were left to wonder where the waters of the torrent could have gone.

At first there was only a vague rumor. Then facts began to come to light. It became certain that it was Monsieur Luc who had begun to turn the course of the torrent on the day when he impounded the water of the springs on the sides of the Monts Bleuses, and that he was using for La Crêcherie all their bright, clear, running water, which gave his new town health and prosperity. Especially had he taken possession of the principal stream, the overflow of which he proposed to store in reservoirs for the use of the people of Combettes. This means of irrigation would make their fortune, and assure the permanence of their happy association, all thanks to this valuable supply of water, which had brought them to a good understanding with each other, and was such a blessing to them all. Before long there was plenty of proof that the water which had disappeared from the Clouque was flowing into the Grand Jean, tenfold more than it had ever been, that it was utilized by intelligence, and had become a source of wealth, instead of death and evil smells. The rancor and anger of Beauclair grew fiercer than ever against Luc, who had so quietly taken possession of what did not belong to him. Why had he stolen the water? Why did he retain it? Why had he given it to his own creatures? People were not to carry off in that way water that belonged to a town—a stream that had always been there, a stream that people were accustomed to see, and that many had found very useful. The tiny thread of water, slowly carrying down with it all kinds of filth, exhaling pestilence and killing people, was forgotten. Nothing more was said about the project of putting it under cover; every one was talking about the great benefit it had been to Beauclair, for irrigation, for washing, for the every-day needs of the townspeople. Such a robbery ought not to be put up with. La Crêcherie would have

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to give back the Clouque—the filthy drain by which the town was poisoned.

Laboque, of course, was the man who made the loudest outcry. He made an official visit to Gourier, the mayor, to find out what steps he intended to take to bring the subject before the municipal council. Laboque professed himself to be particularly interested in the question, as the Clouque passed just at the back of his house, at the end of his little garden, and was of great use to him in many ways. No doubt if he set to work to collect signatures for a petition on the subject, he could have got the names of all the inhabitants in his quarter. But his idea was that the town ought to take the matter in hand, and go to law with La Crêcherie in order to get the stream restored to Beauclair, with damages. Gourier listened to him, and, nodding his head, apparently approved of all he said. But he went no further, though he nourished a strong personal dislike to Luc. Then he asked for a few days in which to consider the matter. He said he wished to think over the case, and to consult the people about him. He knew very well that Laboque wanted the town to take the matter up rather than appear foremost in it in his own person. The sub-prefect Châtelard, with whom Gourier shut himself up in consultation for two hours, must have convinced him, by acting on his dread of complications, that the course he had always taken was a wise one, that course being to let lawsuits be brought by individuals, for he sent for the hardware dealer and explained to him, at great length, that a suit brought by the town would be long in reaching a decision, and probably would amount to nothing, while a suit brought by a citizen would much more probably go against La Crêcherie, especially if, after one party had gained damages, another should bring suit, and so on.

A few days later Laboque brought his suit, in which he claimed twenty-five thousand francs damages. And as if that day were a *fête* day, he had a gathering of all his friends at his house, on the pretext that his son and daughter wanted to give their playfellows a luncheon.

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So Eulalie and Auguste had Honorine Caffiaux, Evariste Mitaine, and Julienne Dacheux. All these little people had grown older in four years. Auguste was sixteen and Eulalie was nine, while Evariste at fourteen was already a serious and reflective boy, and Honorine, at nineteen, was at an age to be married, so that she seemed like a mother to the eight-year-old Julienne, who was the youngest of the party. They all went into the narrow strip of garden, and played and laughed like mad creatures, whose consciences were clear and their spirits gay, for they took no part in the hatreds and quarrels of their parents.

"At last we have him!" cried Laboque. "Monsieur Gourier as good as told me that if we carry the thing out to the end we shall ruin the works. . . . Even supposing the court gives me but ten thousand francs, there are a hundred more of you who can bring suit, and get the same damages, so he will have to pay out of his pocket a nice little million. And that is not all; he will have to give back the torrent, and will be forced to demolish the water-works he has constructed, which will deprive him of that nice clear water which he is so proud of. . . . Ah! my friends, it is going to be a success!"

All were excited and triumphant at the idea of ruining the new works, and, above all, of putting down Luc, the madman, who wanted to destroy trade, inheritance, money, and the most valuable foundations of the social system. Caffiaux was the only one who seemed to hesitate.

"I should have preferred," he said at last, "that the town should have brought the suit. When there is to be a fight we tradespeople always prefer to have the lead taken by other people. Who are the hundred others who will bring suit against La Crêcherie?"

Dacheux burst out laughing.

"Ah! I would have gladly brought suit myself if my house had not stood on the other side of the street! And even now I am not sure I may not, for the Clouque passes by the end of my mother-in-law's yard. I must have a finger in the business; thunder and lightning!"

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"But," resumed Laboque, "in the first place, there is Madame Mitaine, who is in the same position that I am, and whose property, like mine, has been injured since the stream has dried up. . . . You will bring suit, won't you, Madame Mitaine?"

He had asked her to come, with a secret intention of making her formally join his party, for he knew that she desired to live peaceably and to respect the peace of others—good woman that she was! At first she began to laugh.

"Oh! as to the harm done my house by the loss of the Clouque! No—no, neighbor. The truth is, I had given orders never to use a drop of that poisonous water, for fear of making my customers ill. It was so dirty, and it smelled so bad, that if it is ever given back to us we shall have to spend money to get rid of it by putting it underground, as there once was a plan of doing."

Laboque made believe that he did not hear.

"But anyhow, Madame Mitaine, you are with us. Your interests are the same as ours, and if I gain my lawsuit you will do like others whose property is on the riverside—you will stand by the *chose jugée?*"

"We'll see—we'll see about it," replied the handsome wife of the baker. "I always like to take sides with the law—when it is just."

And Laboque had to content himself with this conditional promise. Besides, the excitement into which he had been thrown by his fierce anger against Luc had deprived him of his usual sense. He felt perfectly certain of victory; he knew that he should crush the mad socialist whose experiment had in four years so lowered prices that his receipts were not half what they once were. He felt himself the champion of society, as, sitting at table with Dacheux, he pounded it with his fists; while prudent Caffiaux, a diplomat by nature, waited to see whether old Beauclair or La Crêcherie would triumph before he went too deeply into the quarrel. The children, meantime, at their table, where cakes and syrups were served, paid no attention to the coming battle, but fraternized like a flock

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of happy birds, soaring in a clear sky away to a free and happy future.

All Beauclair was in commotion when people knew of the suit instituted by Laboque, with his demand for twenty-five thousand francs damages; it was like an ultimatum or a declaration of war. From that time forward there was a great rally of the Beauclair forces, all the scattered opponents of the new town; they met and grouped themselves into an active army of enemies who declared openly against Luc and his works, that diabolical establishment where he was forging the ruin of venerable and respectable institutions, government, property, religion, and the family. They all banded together to defend them. All Beauclair took part in the dispute; all the contractors who felt themselves injured brought their people into the town, and the tradespeople, always horrified by new ideas, did likewise. There was no little stockholder who did not feel himself threatened by a horrible cataclysm, which would wreck his trifling means. Women grew angry and indignant as soon as it was represented to them that La Crêcherie was becoming a place of vice where any man who chose to seize on one of them might have her. Even the workmen, even the very poor, who were starving, grew excited, and began cursing the man who so ardently dreamed of saving them from poverty, and whom they now accused of aggravating their wretchedness by making their employers and the rich people harder on them. But, above all, that which most poisoned and misled Beauclair was a violent campaign opened against Luc by the local newspaper, a little sheet published by Lebleu, the printer. On this occasion the paper came out semi-weekly, and Captain Jollivet was supposed to be the author of articles whose violence produced a great sensation. The attack was, indeed, a mere volley of errors and falsehoods, all the foolish mud that it is the fashion to sling at socialism, caricaturing its intentions and sullying its ideal. But the success of such a form of attack was certain when it had to take effect on weak, ignorant people, and it was wonderful how mere excitement flew from one person to another

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in the midst of real complicated intrigues, which united all classes against the disturber of the public peace. All were furious to find themselves likely to be driven out of their own social cesspool, under pretext that they might be led into a healthy city, the just and happy city of the future, and live in peace with one another.

Two days before the case of Laboque against Luc was to be tried before the Civil Court of Beauclair, a great breakfast was given at the Pit by the Delaveaus, whose real object was that the leaders of the movement should meet and talk it over before the fight came on. The Boisgelins were, of course, invited, Mayor Gourier, the sub-prefect Châtelard, Judge Gaume, and his son-in-law, Captain Jollivet, and Abbé Marle. Ladies, too, were there to give the entertainment the appearance of a social gathering.

Châtelard, as was his custom, called at the mayor's house about half-past eleven, to go with him and his wife, still the handsome Leonore. Since La Crêcherie had proved a success, Gourier had had some unpleasant moments of disquietude and doubt. In the first place, he had perceived among the workpeople he employed in his great shoe-factory in the Rue de Brias, a certain restless feeling, a new thrill of excitement, a menace of association. Then he had asked himself if it would not be better to yield to it; to himself enter this association, which possibly might ruin him if he did not join. But this anxiety he kept to himself, for he had an open wound, a grievance which made him the personal enemy of Luc ever since his son Achille, a stout, independent fellow, had broken with him and taken a position at La Crêcherie, where he was near Ma Bleue, where on clear nights he could visit his sweetheart. The mayor had forbidden his son's name to be uttered in his presence. The lad was an ungrateful deserter from the ranks of the *bourgeoisie;* he had gone over to the enemies of social order. And though he did not choose to say so, this defection of his son increased his secret uncertainty of action, for he had a feeling that some day he would be forced to follow his example.

"Well," said he to Châtelard, as soon as he saw him

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come in, "so the trial is about to begin. Laboque came to see me again to obtain the certificate. His idea is still to bring the town into the affair, and it is very difficult to avoid giving him a little help, when we have been pushing him on as we have done."

The sub-prefect smiled.

"No, no, my friend," he said; "believe me, do not get the town involved in it. . . . You have been wise enough to be influenced by the good reasons I gave you not to bring the town into the suit, and to let it be all the work of that terrible Laboque, who is just mad for vengeance and for massacre. Pray keep on as you are doing. Be a mere spectator. You will always be able to profit by his victory—if he is victorious. . . . Ah! my friend, if you only knew all the advantages to be derived from not being mixed up in anything!"

And he completed his speech by a gesture, which meant how much peace he had enjoyed in his sub-prefecture since he had contrived to take no prominent part in any matter. Things were not going on smoothly in Paris, there the central authority was weakening every day. The time was at hand when *bourgeois* society would have to crumble of itself, or be overthrown by a revolution, and he, a good sceptic and philosopher, did not ask to live after that had happened; he would be glad to end his days in the snug little nest he had got into. So all his concern with politics was to let things go on as they would, having as little to do with them as possible, being sure that the government, in the midst of the difficulties that were destroying it, would be very much obliged to him for letting the beast it dreaded work out its own destruction, without worrying it unnecessarily. They knew the value of a sub-prefect who never was heard of, whose intelligent efforts had made Beauclair a place that gave no anxiety to the government. And he had done well for himself. He had been sufficiently remembered to have received many praises, and he quietly went on digging the grave of a society that was near its end, and spending his own last days at the feet of *la belle Leonore.*

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"You understand me, my friend—don't compromise yourself, for in times like those in which we live, who can tell what may happen to-morrow? We may expect anything; so the best way is not to oppose things. Let others go first, and run the risk of breaking their bones. Then you can see what to do."

Here Leonore came in, dressed in light silk, as if she had grown younger, now that she had entered the forties. She was a majestic blond beauty, with a candid, pious expression in her eyes, though all the town knew of her *liaison* with Châtelard. She was, however, accepted everywhere. Châtelard took her hand and kissed it as gallantly as he had ever done, while her husband, looking as if he had been relieved of a duty too heavy for him, looked at them both with an affectionate air, like a man who accepted compensations, and who knew that his own comfort in life was assured.

"Ah!—you are ready. So now we will go—won't we, Châtelard? . . . Be easy. I'll be prudent. I don't want to get into a scrape which might cost us our peace and tranquillity. But all the same, you know, at Delaveau's one must agree with the others."

At the same hour Judge Gaume sat, expecting the arrival of his daughter Lucille and Captain Jollivet, his son-in-law, who were to come for him, and then all three would go together to breakfast at the Delaveaus'. The judge had grown much older during the last four years; he seemed more gloomy and severe; he was keenly devoted to the letter of the law, and would pass hours writing the reasons for his decisions with the utmost minuteness. It was said that he had been heard to moan on certain nights, as if he felt that everything was crumbling under his feet, even that law itself, to which he clung so desperately, as if it were a last plank that might save him. And while still touched by the remembrance of the tragedy in his own family, the misconduct and violent death of his wife, he could not but suffer when he saw the same thing likely to be repeated in the case of his adored daughter, his Lucille, with so innocent a face, so

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like her mother, for she, too, might betray her husband, as he himself had been betrayed. In truth, she had not been married to Jollivet six months before she had betrayed him. The man with whom she compromised herself was a petty lawyer's clerk, a big, blond fellow, younger than herself, with great blue eyes like a girl's. The judge, who suspected what was taking place, suffered from it frightfully. It seemed like a repetition of the treason which had left a wound still bleeding in his heart. He dreaded an explanation, for he feared that it might bring back all that he had suffered on that dreadful day when his wife had killed herself in his presence after confessing her guilt. But what an abominable world he lived in, where every woman he loved had been unfaithful! And how could he believe in justice when it was the best and the most beautiful through whom he suffered?

Morose and dreamy, the judge was seated in his office, where he had just been reading the last number of the *Journal de Beauclair,* when the captain and Lucille came in. The article violently attacking La Crêcherie, which he had just read, seemed to him foolish, unskilful, and brutal. And he said, quietly:

"It is not you, I hope, my good Jollivet, as people say, who write these articles. It does no good to malign our enemies."

The captain gave an embarrassed gesture, and said:

"Oh! write?—you know I never write; that is not in my line. But it is true that I give Lebleu some ideas—notes, you know—little scraps of paper, and he gets somebody—I don't know who—to write them up for him."

And as the judge's face still showed his dissatisfaction, Jollivet went on:

"What would you have? One must fight with such weapons as he has. If those cursed fevers in the Soudan had not forced me to send in my resignation, I would have had some good sword-cuts for those idealists who are doing their best to put an end to us with their wicked Utopias. . . . Ah! good Heaven! — how much good it would do me to shed the blood of a dozen of them."

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Lucille stood silent, small and pretty, with her usual enigmatic smile. And she turned on her big husband, with his warlike mustachios, a look so clearly ironical that the judge could not but perceive in it the amused contempt that she felt for this bold swordsman, whom she could turn about as she pleased with her little pink hands, as a cat plays with a mouse.

"Oh! Charles," said she, softly, "don't be so cruel; don't say things that frighten me."

But here she caught her father's eye. She dreaded lest he might suspect her, and added, with her innocent, candid air:

"Dear father, is it not very wrong for Charles to talk so lightly about shedding blood? We ought all to live in peace, each in his own little hole, and then the good God might give us His blessing and perhaps send us a dear little son."

Gaume saw that she was still ironical, and that before her rose the image of her lover, the petty lawyer's clerk with blue eyes, the doll who had replaced the dolls in her nursery.

"All that is very sad and very cruel," said the judge; but he did not specify what. What could he resolve, what could he do, when every one was bent on deceiving and destroying others?

He got up with difficulty. He took his hat and gloves to start for the breakfast at the Delaveaus'. And in the street, when Lucille, whom he adored, although she made him suffer, took his arm, he had a delightful moment, in which all his troubles were forgotten, as in the case after a lovers' quarrel.

At the Pit, about noon, Delaveau came and joined Fernande in the little parlor which opened on the dining-room in the lower story of the old cottage of the Qurignons, where the manager of the works now lived. It was rather a small place. Down-stairs there was only one other room, which Delaveau used as his office, and which communicated by a wooden gallery with the offices in the vicinity of the works. On the first and second stories

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there were chambers. Ever since a young woman, who delighted in luxury, had inhabited the house, carpets and curtains covered the old walls and gave them a look of cheerfulness and a touch of splendor.

Boisgelin was the first guest to arrive, but came alone.

"Why!" cried Fernande, putting on an air of disappointment, "is not Suzanne coming?"

"She begs you to excuse her," answered Boisgelin, politely; "she has so bad a headache this morning that she cannot leave her chamber."

Every time there was any question of going to the Pit Suzanne always found some pretext to avoid this aggravation of her sorrows; and no one but Delaveau, in his blindness, was deceived by it.

Boisgelin opened the conversation at once.

"So we are met on the eve of the famous lawsuit. Well! isn't it a sure thing? Isn't La Crêcherie as good as ruined?"

Delaveau shrugged his shoulders.

"Whether it loses its case or not, what does it signify to us. Of course, it has done us harm by reducing the price of iron; but we are not competing with it in what we manufacture, and thus far the injury to us has not been great."

Trembling with anger, and marvellously beautiful that day, Fernande looked at her husband with flashing eyes.

"Oh! you don't know how to hate!" she cried. "Here is a man who has interfered with all your projects, who has founded rival works at your very door, the success of which will be the ruin of the concern you manage. He is a constant obstacle and a constant menace, and yet you don't even wish that he may be ruined. . . . Ah! let him be flung naked into a ditch; I should be glad!"

She had felt from the very first that Luc was to be their enemy, and she could never speak without hatred of the man who might disturb her enjoyment of life. That was the one unpardonable crime. She wanted prosperous works, with hundreds of men puddling iron before the burning mouth of the furnaces, all to feed her

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eagerness for pleasure and luxury, which ever demanded more and more expense. It was she, the devourer of men and money, whose appetite could no longer be satisfied by the Pit, with its power-hammers and its gigantic machines. And what would become of her hope of a high position in the future, and of millions accumulated and squandered, if the Pit should go to ruin by reason of competition? Therefore, she left her husband and Boisgelin no peace, but nagged them, worried them, and seized every occasion to speak and let them know her fears and her anger.

Boisgelin, who was rather proud of never having anything to do with the business of the works, and spent his profits without ever counting them, in the rôle of a good fellow, an elegant horseman, and a capital sportsman, shuddered, nevertheless, when he heard Fernande talking about possible ruin. He turned to Delaveau, in whom he still placed absolute confidence, and said:

"You are not anxious, are you, cousin? Is all going on well?"

Again the engineer shrugged his shoulders.

"I tell you, as I have told you before, that our house is not yet affected. . . . The entire town is rising against this man. He is mad. You can see how unpopular he has made himself; and if I am well pleased that this suit is brought against him, it is because that will make an end of him in the opinion of Beauclair. In three months all our workmen whom he has inveigled from us will be coming here, with clasped hands, begging me to take them back. You will see, you will see! There is nothing like authority. The enfranchisement of labor is mere folly. A workman no longer does anything well after he becomes his own master."

There was silence; then he added, in a lower tone, with a look of anxiety in his eyes:

"And yet we must be prudent. La Crêcherie is not a competitor to be left out of consideration, and what would disturb me would be the absence of funds necessary for a contest in case of any sudden emergency. We are living

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too much from hand to mouth. We shall find it indispensable to create a sinking fund, and put into it—we will say—one-third of our yearly earnings."

Fernande made an involuntary gesture of protestation. It had been her fear that her lover's means might be impaired, that she might be the sufferer, and have to give up prospects of joy and pride and pleasure that she expected would flow to her out of his wealth. She looked up at Boisgelin, who, of his own accord, responded at once:

"No, no, cousin; not just now. I cannot give you anything. I have too heavy expenses. Moreover, I ought to thank you again, for you are making my money bring me even more interest than you promised me. . . . We will see about it later. We will talk the matter over."

But Fernande remained nervous, and her suppressed anger fell upon Nise, who had just been breakfasting with her nurse, and who was brought in before being taken to pass the afternoon with one of her little friends. Nise, who was nearly seven, was growing up a charming little girl, fair and rosy, always smiling, with short, light curls, which made her look like a little woolly sheep.

"Look here, my dear Boisgelin; here is a little disobedient girl, who will make me ill. . . . Ask her what she did the other day at the luncheon that she gave to your son Paul and little Louise Mazelle."

Without the least embarrassment, Nise smiled as gayly as before, as she fixed her limpid blue eyes on the company.

"Oh!" continued her mother, "she will not own that she did wrong. . . . Well, though I had repeatedly forbidden her, she opened the old gate that leads into our garden, and let in the whole crowd of dirty little brats from La Crêcherie. Among them was that Nanet, a horrid little scamp, to whom she has taken a great fancy. And your Paul was there, too, and Louise Mazelle, fraternizing with all that set, the children of Bonnaire, the man who left us so basely. Yes, Paul paired off with Antoinette, and Louise with Lucien, and Mademoiselle

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Nise with her friend Nanet, all doing their best to spoil our flower-beds! And, you see, she does not even blush with shame while I am telling you about it."

"That is not fair," Nise answered, simply, in her clear, little voice; "nothing was broken, and we were playing together very nicely. Nanet is so droll."

This answer completed Fernande's exasperation.

"Oh, you find him droll, do you? Now, listen: if I ever find you playing with him again, I will deprive you of your dessert for a week. I have no intention that you shall be the occasion of any unpleasantness with those people from the other side. They will make use of the opportunity to say everywhere that we entice their children for some bad purpose. . . . Understand, then, that this time I am in earnest; and that if you see Nanet again, I shall have something to say about it."

"Yes, mamma," said Nise, still smiling, with her air of childish serenity.

As soon as she had gone away with her nurse, after having kissed every one, her mother concluded:

"The matter is perfectly simple; I shall have the gate walled up, and then I shall be sure that the children can no longer communicate. Nothing is so harmful as these urchins' games; they convey every kind of infection."

Neither Delaveau nor Boisgelin had interfered, seeing nothing more in the matter than a childish fancy, somewhat severely treated for the child's own good. But Nise, who was very persistent, carried away in her little heart the image of that Nanet who was so droll, and who played so nicely, and in the future this thought brought forth its results.

The guests now began to arrive, first the Gouriers, with Châtelard, and after them Judge Gaume, with the more youthful Jollivets. Abbé Marle made his appearance last, after having made the company wait for him, according to his custom. The party numbered ten, exclusive of the Mazelles, who had been detained by some obstacle, and had promised to come to coffee. Fernande placed the sub-prefect at her right, and the judge on her left, while

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Delaveau seated himself between the remaining ladies, Leonore and Lucille. The two ends of the table were occupied by Gourier and Boisgelin, the Abbé Marle and Captain Jollivet. The occasion was intended to be very informal, in order that conversation should be easy and general. Moreover, the dining-room, of which Fernande was secretly ashamed, was so narrow that when there were more than twelve at table the service was inconvenienced by the old mahogany sideboard.

From the time that the fish, delicious trout from the Mionne, were served, the conversation turned on nothing but La Crêcherie and Luc. And the remarks of these *bourgeois,* who considered themselves well-informed on such subjects, and in a position to understand what they considered a socialistic Utopia, were very little wiser or more intelligent than the extraordinary comments of Dacheux and the Laroques. The only person really capable of grasping the situation was Châtelard, but he treated it as a joke.

"You are aware, of course," said he, "that in this new order of things young men and young girls are brought up in common; they attend the same classes, and occupy the same workrooms. All this must certainly result in a rapid increase in the population."

"Oh, how horrid!" said Fernande, with an air of profound disgust, for she affected extreme prudery.

Leonore, whose religion displayed itself in an increasingly severe morality, leaned towards her neighbor, the Abbé Marle, murmuring:

"A shameful thing! And God will surely punish it."

But the abbé contented himself with raising his eyes towards heaven, for, as he had no wish to break off his friendship with Sœurette, and still continued to breakfast at regular intervals at La Crêcherie, his position was becoming difficult. He did his duty by all his flock; above all, by those who had strayed from the fold, and whom he tried to believe would eventually return to it. This constant struggle against the evil influence of the spirit of the times was what he called standing in the breach. His

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efforts to purify the old social order in its very death struggle had proved vain, and he was now the victim of a deep depression, as he saw the number of the faithful in his church steadily decreasing.

A flutelike little laugh from Lucille sounded so gayly that every one at table looked at her. But she remained completely at her ease, and gazed about her with an innocent air, glancing furtively at her husband, the captain, to see how the subject struck him.

Delaveau made a gesture as if he were bored. This aspect of the subject did not interest him. What he considered of importance was the undermining of authority involved in this unprincipled theory of living without a master.

"How their future city will be governed," said he, "is beyond me. For it is not a question of the works alone; they announce that under the co-operative system they will eventually reach a point where the wages will be suppressed altogether, and that a just division of wealth will not be accomplished until every one in the community contributes his share of labor. . . . I do not know any more dangerous idea than this, for it is one that it is impossible should ever be realized. Is not that so, Monsieur Gourier?"

The mayor, who was eating his breakfast with his face almost in his plate, wiped his mouth deliberately before answering, for he saw the sub-prefect looking at him.

"No doubt it cannot be realized. . . . Still, the system of co-operation should not be lightly condemned. It contains a great force which we can make use of ourselves."

This prudence enraged the captain, who lost his self-command.

"What!" he cried, "you have actually reached the point of not condemning wholesale the execrable attempts which this man, this Monsieur Luc, is meditating against all that we love, and against our ancient France, as the swords of our fathers made her and bequeathed to us!"

At this moment lamb cutlets with asparagus tips were

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served, and with these there was a general attack upon Luc. His execrated name was sufficient to make them all of one mind, and to unite them closely in a common terror as regarded their threatened interests, as well as in an imperative need of protection and of vengeance. They were cruel enough to ask Gourier for news of his renegade son Achille, and the mayor thus appealed to felt it his duty to curse his son. Châtelard, alone, still attempted to keep up his joking air. The captain continued to prophesy the worst possible disasters if the factions were not immediately reduced to order at the point of the bayonet. And he raised such a panic that Boisgelin took the alarm, and sought some reassuring declaration from Delaveau.

"The man is already in difficulties," said the director of the Pit. "The prosperity of La Crêcherie is on the surface only, and the most trivial accident will be sufficient to crush it. . . . My wife told me an incident. . . ."

"Yes," continued Fernande, with an expression that displayed irritation and delight at the opportunity of relieving herself, "I have it as a fact from my laundress. . . . She knows Ragu, one of our old workmen, who left us to go to the new works. Well, it seems that Ragu says everywhere that he has had enough of it, enough of their dirty hole, that he is bored to death, that he is not the only person who thinks so, and that one of these fine mornings they will all return to us. . . . Oh, who will start the thing, who will take the first step towards attacking and demolishing this Luc?"

"There is the Laboque lawsuit," said Boisgelin, coming to her assistance. "I am very much in hopes that it will do the business."

A fresh pause ensued while a duck *au sang* made its appearance. The Laboque lawsuit was the real occasion of this friendly reunion, but no one had yet ventured to allude to it, owing to the fact that Judge Gaume maintained silence on the subject. The judge ate very little, his secret griefs having given him a digestive trouble.

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He occupied himself with listening to the other guests, regarding them as he did so with his cold, gray eyes, from which all expression seemed to be voluntarily withdrawn. He had rarely shown himself so little communicative, and his silence at length became oppressive, for every one was anxious to know on what ground he stood, and to have, at least, some certainty in regard to the adverse decision which it was expected that he would give. It did not enter any one's head that he could favor an acquittal, but they were all greatly in hopes that he would be obliging enough to put himself under some engagement to the contrary by expressing a decided opinion.

It was the captain who finally made the attack.

"The law is explicit, is it not, Judge Gaume? All injuries must be repaired by the person who has caused them?"

"Most certainly," answered Gaume.

Every one waited expectantly, but he relapsed into silence. The affair of the Clouque was then discussed exhaustively, in order that he might be forced to commit himself. The infected stream was now spoken of as one of the ornaments of Beauclair; yet it was claimed that the water had been stolen from the town, in order to give it to the peasants, whose heads had been turned to such an extent that their village had become a nest of furious anarchists, contagion from which was a menace to the whole country. The characteristic *bourgeois* terror appeared for the ancient and sacred rights of property, which they held must be in peril if the descendants of the close-fisted peasants of former times had reached the point of making common property of their parcels of land. It was high time that the law should interfere and compel the cessation of such a scandal.

"We may make ourselves easy," Boisgelin remarked, finally; "our social interests will be in the best hands. Nothing can stand against a righteous judgment made without bias by an upright conscience."

"Most certainly," repeated Gaume, quietly.

This time it was plain that nothing more satisfactory

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than these non-committal words was to be obtained from him, although those present had hoped for a positive condemnation of Luc. The meal was over; there was nothing more, after a Russian salad, but strawberry ice and the dessert. But appetites had been satisfied, and there was laughter and certainty of victory. After the guests had withdrawn to the *salon* for coffee, the Mazelles arrived, and were welcomed, as usual, with a half-mocking affection, so greatly did these possessors of a private fortune, who enjoyed the delights of idleness, appeal to the hearts of all. Madame Mazelle's malady was no better, but she was delighted at having obtained from Dr. Novarre some new tablets, by the use of which she was enabled to eat everything with impunity. Nothing was talked of but the abominable stories told of La Crêcherie, the threats of suppressing incomes, and of abolishing inheritance, all of which were enough to curdle the blood. To discuss such disagreeable things could do no good, and Mazelle, who watched over his wife with the utmost care, entreated those present by significant winks not to broach such atrocious subjects, as they might prove injurious to her uncertain health. The breakfast had been delightful, and the guests hastened home to live lives full of joys and riches, in which they alone were to gather its fruits and flowers.

The day of the famous lawsuit arrived, in the midst of ever-increasing anger and hatred. Never before had Beauclair been the scene of such furious passions. Luc was, at first, astonished, and merely laughed. Laboque's subpœna simply amused him, the more so because the demand for twenty-five thousand francs damages for injury received could not, it seemed to him, be sustained. It would be very difficult to prove that the drying-up of the Clouque was due to the fact of the springs being impounded and utilized at La Crêcherie; and, moreover, such springs belonged to the property; they were Jordan's, free and clear and without restriction, so that the land-owner had the right to dispose of the water as he saw fit. Laboque, on the other hand, would be obliged to rely

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on his ability to show evidence that the injury he claimed to have been done to him really existed; and this was what he attempted to do, but so unskilfully that no law-court in the world could sustain him. As Luc good-humoredly said, it was he himself who ought to have claimed a public assessment as a recompense for having relieved the dwellers on the river-bank from the poisonous nuisance of which they had so long complained. The town had only to fill up the trench, and sell the land for building purposes. This would prove a windfall that would put a few hundred thousand francs into its treasury. Luc laughed, therefore, because he did not imagine that such a proposition could be serious; and it was not until afterwards, in the presence of the fierceness of the rancor and hostility that was displayed against him on every side, that he took in the gravity of the situation and of the mortal peril to which his work was going to be exposed.

This, to Luc, was a very distressing shock. The optimistic simplicity belonging to him as an apostle was not so complete as to make him ignorant of the wickedness of men. In the struggle that he had undertaken against the old order of things, he knew that others would not give way without anger and opposition. He had braced himself to meet the martyrdom which he foresaw and to endure the stones and mud with which ungrateful crowds are wont to overwhelm those who are in advance of their age. Nevertheless, his heart wavered for a moment, as he felt the on-coming of the forces of stupidity, cruelty, and treason. It was fully apparent to him that behind the interested attack made by Laboque and the retail trade was the entire *bourgeoisie,* including all those who held property, and were unwilling to loosen their hold upon it. His efforts towards amalgamation and co-operation put capitalist society, which is based upon the wages system, in such peril that he became, in its eyes, a public enemy, whom it was desirous to get rid of at any price. And it was the Pit, Guerdache, the town, and authority under all its forms—paternal, communal, or governmental—which had taken up the matter and had entered into the struggle with the

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determination to exterminate him. All these menaced egoisms advanced out of the shade, approached each other, united with one another, and resulted in such a complication of snarls, open traps, and prepared pitfalls, that he knew himself to be lost if he made the first false step. If he once stumbled, the whole pack would fall upon him, and he would be devoured. He well knew them all, and could have named them all—the public functionaries, the merchants, the simple bondholders, with their tranquil faces, who would have devoured him alive had they seen him fall down at a street corner. But he repressed his sickness of heart, and girded himself for battle, in the conviction that nothing is ever established without a struggle, and that the great achievements of humanity are all watered with its blood.

It was on a Tuesday, which was market-day, that the lawsuit came before the civil court, presided over by Gaume. Beauclair was in an uproar, and the tumult on the Place de la Mairie and in the Rue de Brias was increased by the presence of outsiders from the neighboring villages. Sœurette, filled with uneasiness, had implored Luc to allow some reliable friends to accompany him to the court-room. He refused obstinately, however, for he was determined to appear alone, just as he was resolved to speak in his own defence, accepting counsel only as a matter of form. Upon his entrance into the audience-hall, which was very small, and already filled with an excited crowd, a sudden silence occurred, caused by that brutal curiosity which greets a solitary and defenceless victim, who offers himself as a sacrifice. His quiet courage still further enraged his enemies, for they interpreted it as insolence. He stood upright at the bar, and as he looked calmly at the crowd which desired his disgrace he recognized Laboque, Dacheux, Caffiaux, and other shop-keepers, mingled with the unknown crowd of raging, furious enemies, whose faces he had never seen before. He was a little relieved to perceive that his acquaintances at Guerdache and at the Pit had at least the good taste not to come and witness his abandonment to the wild beasts.

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Very long debates of great interest had been expected, but there were none. Laboque had selected one of those provincial lawyers whose reputation for rascality make them the terror of a whole region. The happiest moments for Luc's enemies were during this man's pleading, for, perceiving clearly, as he did, the slenderness of the legal claim upon which the demand for damages rested, he confined himself to ridiculing the attempted reforms at La Crêcherie. He created a great deal of amusement by drawing a comic and malignant picture of the social relations of the future. He excited burning indignation on all sides by demonstrating that the unrestricted intercourse of children of both sexes from infancy would lead to the abolition of the holy institution of marriage. Nevertheless, the general feeling was that he had not touched the real injury, nor had he made the supreme argument, and struck the overwhelming blow which gains a case and annihilates the defendant. The general uneasiness, therefore, became so great that when Luc began to speak in his turn his first words were received with murmurs. He spoke very simply, and, without taking the smallest notice of the attacks upon his work, he contented himself with showing, in a convincing manner, that Laboque had based his demand on insufficient foundations. Had not he, Luc, rendered a service to Beauclair by draining the pestiferous Clouque, and thereby improving the sanitary condition of the town, while, at the same time, he made it a present of good land for building purposes? The fact that the improvements at La Crêcherie were responsible for the disappearance of the stream was not yet proved, and he had a right to expect that positive evidence of this should be produced. A trace of the bitterness in his sore heart escaped him in his conclusion, when he said that he looked for no gratitude from any one for the services that he believed himself to have rendered to the town. He considered that he should be only too happy if he were allowed to pursue his own work in peace, without having malicious quarrels forced upon him. Judge Gaume had been obliged several times to impose silence on the audi-

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ence; and after the public prosecutor had spoken in an intentionally confused manner, by means of which he mixed up right and wrong, the reply of Laboque's lawyer was so violent, and he called forth such acclamations by treating Luc as an anarchist who meditated the destruction of the town, that the judge was obliged to threaten the audience with expulsion from the hall if such demonstrations were renewed. Then he postponed his decision for a fortnight.

A fortnight later passions were still at fever-heat, and people disputed in the market-place as to the form of the decision. Opinion was almost unanimous as to a severe condemnation, with ten to fifteen thousand francs' damages, exclusive of consequences; that is, of the obligation to restore the Clouque to its former condition. There were certain people, however, who shook their heads, and were sure of nothing, not having been satisfied with the attitude of Judge Gaume during the arguments. They spoke of him as eccentric, and even went so far as to doubt whether his mind was altogether sound, since he seemed so gloomy, and his administration of justice was scrupulous to a morbid degree. Another thing which caused uneasiness was the manner in which he closed his house to visitors the day after the case was heard, under the pretext of indisposition; yet it was said that he was perfectly well, and that his only motive was to escape all outside pressure by receiving no one, so that no influence could interfere with his legal conscience. What did he do in the recesses of that solitary house, where all the doors and windows were closed, and which his daughter herself did not enter? What moral struggle, what internal combat, was he undergoing, at the close of a life already shipwrecked as regarded all that he had loved and all that he had believed in?

The decision of the court was to be given at noon. At the opening of the sitting, the court-room was even more crowded, more excited, and more turbulent than before. It resounded with laughter, and expressions of expectation and animosity were shouted from one end of it to

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the other. All Luc's enemies were present, in order to witness his downfall. He, himself, as courageous as before, had refused to allow any one to accompany him, preferring to present himself alone, the better to express his mission of peace. As he sat upright, he looked around the court-room, and smiled, apparently unconscious that all this anger was vented upon him. Exactly at the hour Judge Gaume made his appearance, followed by two associate justices and the state's attorney. The clerk had no need to enforce silence, for all voices were suddenly hushed, and all the expectant faces shone with anxious curiosity. The judge seated himself, and then arose, with his written decision in his hand. For a moment he remained silent and immovable, with his eyes looking far away, beyond the limits of the crowd. Then, in a slow, expressionless voice, he began his reading. This lasted a long time, for the phrase "inasmuch as" recurred with monotonous regularity, as he considered the question under all its different aspects, constraining himself to give due weight to the most trivial details. The arguments for and against followed one upon another so closely that the audience listened without fully understanding what was meant, and was wholly unable to foresee the conclusion. At each advance, however, it became more apparent to the initiated that Luc's defence, that is to say, the absence of actual injury sustained, and the right of every property owner to establish improvements on his own property, when under no restrictions to the contrary, was admitted. The conclusion confirmed all this, for Luc was acquitted.

There was a moment of stupefaction in the court-room. Then, when the nature of the verdict was understood, silence was succeeded by howls and violent cries for vengeance. The over-excited crowd, fed for months upon lies, now saw its promised victim snatched away, at the last moment, before its eyes; and believing, as it did, that the law which had acquitted him had been bought and sold, it sought to lay hands upon him in order to tear him to pieces. Was not Luc a public enemy, a stranger, come

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from no one knew where, on purpose to corrupt Beauclair, to ruin trade, and to incite civil war by instigating workmen against their employers? Had he not, through a scheme of diabolical wickedness, stolen water from the town by drying up a stream, the disappearance of which was a disaster to the dwellers on the banks of the river. Such accusations as these were repeated by the *Journal de Beauclair* every week, and by dint of repetition even the dullest minds comprehended them, together with their venomous commentaries, and the demands for immediate vengeance which accompanied them. Even more, people of importance in the *bourgeois* quarter not only transmitted these reports to the more insignificant members of the community, but developed them further, and imparted to them the weight of their own position and influence. And the lowest classes, thus instructed and thus blinded, were convinced that nothing but evil could issue from La Crêcherie, and became filled with a thirst for blood, which caused them to demand Luc's life. The outcries of "To death with him! The robber and murderer, to death with him!" redoubled. Judge Gaume at first remained standing in the midst of the tumult. He attempted to speak, and to cause the court-room to be cleared; but he was soon forced to abandon any idea of making himself heard. He confined himself, therefore, to adjourning the court, and retired quietly and with dignity, followed by the associate justices and the public prosecutor.

Luc, still smiling, remained calmly in his seat. The decision of the court had surprised him quite as much as it did his adversaries, for he was fully cognizant of the vicious atmosphere in which the judge lived, and had believed him incapable of justice. It was at least a comfort to find an upright man amid so much human weakness. But when the cries for his life made themselves heard, Luc's smile became very sad, and he turned towards the howling mob with his heart full of bitterness. What had he done to all these petty *bourgeois,* these tradespeople and working-men? Had he not wished for the good of

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them all? Had he not labored that they all should be happy, and that they should love one another and live in unity? Yet they threatened him with their fists and deafened him with violent cries of "To death with him! The thief, the murderer, to death with him!" These poor, ignorant people, bewildered and maddened by lies, occasioned him the deepest distress, all the more because of the tenderness which he retained for them in spite of himself. But he suppressed all traces of feeling, for he wished to appear brave and steadfast, and to bear himself proudly under insult. The mob, believing itself set at defiance by his behavior, would have ended by breaking down the oaken barrier, if the guards had not succeeded in driving them out and closing the doors. The clerk, sent by Judge Gaume, came to beg Luc not to go out at once, for fear of possible violence, and Luc was obliged to promise that he would wait a few minutes in the room of the *concierge* of the court until the crowd should be dispersed.

This necessity aroused in Luc a feeling of shame; it was revolting to him to be forced to hide himself. He passed the most painful quarter of an hour of his existence in the *concierge's* room, feeling himself a coward for not going straight out into the crowd, and utterly failing to accommodate himself to the uneasy situation which the sins of others had created for him. As soon as the various approaches to the court-house seemed to be clear, he would listen to no further remonstrances, and insisted on setting forth and returning home quietly on foot, without being accompanied by any one. He had come alone, and he would return alone. He had nothing in his hand but a slender cane, and he regretted having brought even this, for fear that he should be suspected of doing so for self-defence. He was obliged to pass through the whole of Beauclair, and he began to walk slowly through the streets, without any one observing him until he reached the Place de la Mairie. The mob, when it issued from the court-house, had only waited a few minutes, and then, feeling certain that Luc would not come out for some hours, sepa-

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rated in order to spread the news of his acquittal over the entire town. When Luc reached the Place de la Mairie, however, where the market was held, he was recognized. He was pointed out by gestures, described in words, and some persons went so far as to follow him, without, as yet, any bad intentions, but simply for the purpose of seeing what would happen. The people whom he met there were only peasants, shoppers, and idlers who were not actually engaged in the quarrel. The situation, therefore, did not begin to look serious until the moment when he emerged into the Rue de Brias, at the corner of which stood Laboque, in front of his own shop, raging like a lion let loose, furious at his own defeat, and declaiming on his wrongs in the midst of a cluster of people.

All the tradesmen and petty venders of the neighborhood had collected around Laboque's shop as soon as they heard of the new disaster. So it was true, then, that the law had decided in favor of La Crêcherie, and that it was going to complete their ruin by means of co-operative stores. Caffiaux, who seemed stunned, preserved silence, and was apparently revolving thoughts too big for utterance. Dacheux, the butcher, however, purple with rage, was very violent, and declared himself ready to protect the sacred meat of the rich; he even spoke of killing every one rather than lower his price a single *centime*. Madame Mitaine did not agree with him; she had never been in favor of the lawsuit, and she declared honestly that she intended to sell her bread for whatever she could get for it, and then she should see what happened. Laboque, beside himself with rage, was recounting to some new arrival, and for the tenth time, the abominable treason of Judge Gaume, when he perceived Luc, who was passing tranquilly before the hardware-store whose ruin he had compassed. This audacity completed the desperation of Laboque, who rushed forward to throw himself upon Luc, with the cry, half-stifled by the weight of his own hatred, "To death with the thief and murderer! To death with him!" When Luc was in front of the shop, he deliberately turned his head, without stopping, and for a moment

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his calm, brave glance rested on the tumultuous group, whence issued the stormy invectives of Laboque. Then the whole crowd, believing itself insulted, raised a general clamor, which increased and grew more threatening, like the blast of a tempest: "To death with him! To death with the thief and murderer! To death with him!" Luc continued his walk as quietly as if he were not concerned, looking neither to the right nor to the left, and preserving the air of a passer-by who is interested in a street scene. Nearly all the crowd began to follow him, redoubling their howls, insults, and threats, still shouting, furiously: "To death with him! To death with the thief and murderer! To death with him!"

All this uproar continued, and increased in fury as he proceeded along the pavement of the Rue de Brias. From every doorway fresh additions poured forth to join the mob. Women appeared on their thresholds, hooting as Luc passed. Some of them even, more exasperated than the rest, rushed out, and cried with the men: "To death with him! To death with the thief and murderer! To death with him!" Luc saw a young and beautiful woman, the wife of a fruit merchant, who hissed insults through her dazzling white teeth, and threatened him from a distance with her rosy nails, as though she would tear him in pieces. Even the little children followed in the throng, and there was one of them, not more than five or six years old, and no taller than a boot, who screamed himself hoarse, and even ran between the victim's legs, in order to make himself more distinctly heard when he shouted: "To death with him! To death with the thief and murderer! To death with him!" Poor little boy! Who had taught him thus early this outcry of hate? The tumult became worse than ever when the crowd passed the shops at the top of the street. The workwomen in Gourier's shoe-factory appeared at the windows, shook their fists, and howled. It was the same thing with the workmen at the factories of Chordorge and Miranda, who were smoking on the pavement while waiting for the bell for returning to work, and who, in their dulness of comprehension,

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added their voices to the uproar. One little, thin, red-haired man, in particular, with uneasy eyes, acted as though he were demented, running to and fro, and shouting more violently than all the others: "To death with him! To death with the thief and murderer! To death with him!"

Ah! that ascent of the Rue de Brias, with the steadily increasing crowd of enemies at his heels, enduring, as he went, that ignominous storm of threats and insults. Luc recalled the evening of his first arrival at Beauclair, four years before, when the despairing misery of the poor, and the hungry faces in this same street, had filled him with such acute pity that he had vowed to devote his own life to the relief of these unfortunates. What had he done, in these four years, that he should be the victim of such accumulated hatred, even to the point of being hounded by this unseemly rabble, all clamoring for his destruction? He had made himself the apostle of the future, of social conditions which were to be established on firm foundations, and governed by brotherly kindness. He had set an example of these things in La Crêcherie, where the future city was shown in embryo, and where justice and happiness already reigned. And all this only sufficed to make the whole town regard him as a malefactor, a fact of which he was made aware by this pack of hounds which barked at his heels. But what had he done that he should endure the agony of martyrdom, through which he was now passing, at the hands of those whose redemption had been his dearest work? He could pardon the hatred of those *bourgeois* whose tranquil existence he troubled, for he understood their terror of having to part with their selfish gains. He could forgive the shopkeepers, too, for they believed themselves to be ruined by him, while he had thought only of a better employment of social forces, in order to avoid a useless waste of public money. He could excuse the working-people, whom it had been his mission to save from misery, and for whom he had so carefully built his model town; yes, even though it was they who hounded him and insulted

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him, for their minds had been poisoned and their hearts hardened. They were but an ignorant crowd, raised in revolt against the man who desired nothing but their good, refusing to quit the chains of servitude in which they suffered, clinging to want and to the filth of ages, and closing their eyes and ears to the happiness put before them. But although he was able to find excuse for all in the charity of his sorrowful heart, it was agony to him to see among the most insulting of his followers workmen from his own factories and workshops, whom he had labored to make noble, free, and happy in the future.

Luc continued his way along the Rue de Brias, which had never seemed so long. The frantic mob was still increasing; its shouts became more violent, and he felt its steps close upon him.

"To death with him! To death with the thief and murderer! To death with him!"

For one moment he paused and looked at his pursuers, that they might not think that he was running away, and, as it so happened that just then there was a pile of stones before a house that was being built, a man stooped, picked one up, and flung it at him. Instantly others picked up stones, and a perfect hail of them was hurled at him, with fiercer threats than ever.

"To death with him! To death with the thief and murderer! To death with him!"

They stoned him, but he made no gesture, and he would not attempt to escape the stones. He went on his way as before—on his way up his hill of suffering. He had nothing in his hands, for the slender cane that he carried he had put under his arm; and he walked calmly on, impressed with the idea that his mission made him invulnerable if he had to succeed in it. Only his sad heart suffered terribly to witness such madness and such error. Tears came into his eyes, and he had to make a great effort to prevent them from falling.

"To death with him! To death with the thief and murderer! To death with him!"

A stone struck him on the heel, another on the thigh.

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It became like a game, and children joined in it, but they were not expert. The stones fell back upon the street. Twice, however, they passed so near his head that some of the crowd thought they had broken his skull. He did not turn his head, but went on up the Rue de Brias with the same measured step as if he had been quietly going home after a walk. In his grief at such an outbreak of ingratitude, it seemed as if he did not choose to inform himself of what was passing behind him all along that street of misery in which he endured martyrdom. But at last a stone hit him. It tore his right ear, while another struck him on the left hand, cutting the palm like a sharp knife. His blood flowed and fell in great red drops upon the ground.

"To death with him! To death with the thief and murderer! To death with him!"

A sudden panic seemed to seize the crowd. Some ran away in their fright. Several women screamed, and carried off their children. There were only a few of the most furious who still pursued their victim. Luc continued on his painful way. He merely looked down at his hand. Then he pulled out his handkerchief and, after wiping his ear, wrapped it round his bloody hand. His pace had grown slower, but he braced himself for a last effort as he felt upon his neck the very breath of the pursuing mob.

In front was the little, thin workman with the red hair and the uneasy eyes, in a perfect transport of passion. He was said to be a smith from the Pit. He had followed Luc steadily from the lower part of the street, and now, making a last effort, he sprang forward, and with all his strength, unconscious probably of any reason for his frenzy of hatred, he spat violently in Luc's face.

"To death with him! To death with him, the thief and murderer! To death with him!"

Luc had now reached the end of the Rue de Brias, and this time he trembled under such an abominable insult. He became deathly pale; his whole body quivered, and he raised his strong fist, clinched in a movement of revenge.

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Splendid colossus that he was, he could have annihilated this puny dwarf with one blow. But standing still for one moment in his magnificent strength, he had time to recover himself, and restrained the descent of his fist. Two large tears, however, coursed down his cheeks, tears of distress which up to that moment he had been able to restrain, but which he was powerless to conceal in the last extremity of the agony that had wrung them from him. He wept for the depths of ignorance and misunderstanding displayed by these unhappy people, whose welfare was so dear to him, and who would not permit him to save them. At length, in the midst of taunts and jeers, he was suffered to enter his own house, solitary and bleeding.

That evening Luc wished to be alone, and, therefore, he shut himself up in the cottage where he still lived, at the end of the park on the road to Combettes. He indulged no illusions in regard to the success of his acquittal. The overwhelming violence of the afternoon, the demonstration of the crowd against him, indicated the sort of warfare which would be waged against him, now that the whole town was roused. It was the last agony of a dying social condition that did not wish to die. It resisted and struggled violently in the hope of arresting the progress of humanity. Some persons, those in authority especially, relied for safety upon pitiless repression; others, of a sentimental character, made appeals to the past, to the poetry of the past, and to all that man regrets to leave forever; and there were others still, who, filled with exasperation, allied themselves with the revolutionists, as though in haste to see the end. All this Luc had had cause to perceive in the attack made upon him by Beauclair, which represented a world in miniature in the midst of the great one. He remained steadfast, determined not to abandon the struggle; but he was, none the less, profoundly distressed, and felt the necessity of overmastering his distress this evening, if he did not wish that it should be perceived. During his rare hours of weakness, he preferred to shut himself up alone, as he was now doing, and to drink his cup of suffering to the dregs, that he might reappear before men as

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a conquerer. Therefore he fastened the doors and windows, and gave positive orders, as he did so, that he should not be disturbed.

Towards eleven o'clock it seemed to him that he heard light steps on the road. Then it seemed as though there were a call, which, although it was soft as a breath, startled him. He went quickly to the window, opened it, and, looking through the blinds, perceived a light shadow. Then a voice of great sweetness greeted him.

"Monsieur Luc, it is I, and it is necessary that I should speak to you at once."

It was Josine. He did not pause to reflect, but went down and unclosed the little door which opened on the road. He made her come in, and led her by the hand into his carefully closed chamber. In it a lighted lamp sent forth a peaceful glow. Then, when he looked at her closely, he was seized with great uneasiness. Her clothes were in disorder, and her face was bruised.

"Heavens, Josine! What is the matter with you? What has happened?"

She burst into tears. The collar of her dress was torn, and showed the whiteness of her neck, upon which her hair fell in confusion.

"Ah, Monsieur Luc, I made up my mind to tell you. . . . Not because he beat me when he came home, but because of the threats that he has made against you. It was necessary that you should know them this very evening."

Then she proceeded to relate how Ragu, when he heard what had taken place in the Rue de Brias, and was made acquainted with the ignominious treatment accorded to his employer, had gone on a debauch to Caffiaux's *cabaret* with Bourron and his other boon companions. He had just come back from there, intoxicated, crying out that he had had enough of the old sty at La Crêcherie, and that he would not remain another day in a place where one was bored within an inch of his life, and had not even the right to drink a glass too much. Then, after having delivered himself of a storm of vulgar abuse, he had ordered her to

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pack their goods, so as to move the very next morning to the Pit, where all workmen from La Crêcherie were received with open arms. And when she tried to put him off, he had ended by beating her and turning her out-of-doors.

"For me, Monsieur Luc, it does not matter. It is you; great Heavens, it is you whom they insult, and whom they wish so much to injure! Ragu will go off to-morrow morning; nothing will stop him, and he will take with him five or six of his friends, whose names I do not know; . . . and I—what can I do? I shall be obliged to follow him, and all this troubles me so greatly that I felt that I must tell you about it at once, for fear I should never see you again."

He looked at her steadily. A new wave of bitterness surged over his heart. The evil was even greater, then, than he had anticipated. He saw his own workmen leaving him, in order to return to their hard, filthy, miserable life of former times; mere homesickness was taking them back to the inferno from which he had struggled so patiently to deliver them. Four years had given him no hold whatever upon either their intelligence or their affection. Worst of all, Josine was no happier than she had been then; she came back to him, insulted, beaten, thrust out into the street, just as she had been on that first day. Nothing had been accomplished; everything was still to be begun, for was not Josine the representative of the suffering people? His impulse towards action had begun upon that evening when he found her so sad, so desolate, the victim of this accursed system of labor, which held her in its clutches, as though it were some species of slavery. She had been, then, the humblest, the lowliest, the most abased of human creatures, yet she was the fairest, the gentlest, the most saintly. The world would never be saved so long as woman suffered.

"Oh, Josine, Josine, how much pain you give me, and how I love you!" he murmured, in a voice of infinite tenderness, while she also wept, moved by his distress.

But the sight of his tears caused her still greater suf-

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fering. For Luc to give way thus, to show such deep emotion! he who was her god, whom she adored as all-powerful because of the help he had given her, the happiness which he had brought into her life! The thought of the insults he had just endured, and of his fearful martyrdom upon the Rue de Brias, redoubled her adoration, and drew her insensibly towards him with an irresistible impulse to pour balm into his wounds and to yield him her entire devotion, if by so doing she could for a moment ease his pain. Her only thought was how she could relieve his torture, and by what means she could efface the insults offered him, and make him feel that one heart at least admired, venerated, adored him. She leaned forward, her hands extended, and her face transfigured with love.

"Ah, Monsieur Luc, how grieved I am to see your distress, and how delighted I should be if I could relieve your suffering, even for a moment!"

They were so near each other that her warm breath touched his face. Their mutual sorrow inspired them both with a tenderness that struggled for expression. How great was his suffering! How great was hers! For the moment his mind was entirely filled with the thought of her, even as she, in her turn, had no thought but of him; and the hearts of both were overflowing with an infinite compassion, an infinite yearning for love and for each other.

"It is not I who should be pitied; it is only you, Josine, whose suffering is a cruel wrong, and whom I long to save."

"No, no, Monsieur Luc; I am of no consequence; it is you who do not deserve to suffer, because, in everything, you are to us like the good God Himself."

She leaned forward gently, and he pressed her to him with passionate fervor. A common need impelled them towards each other, like two flames, which meet and mingle to become a single focus of light and warmth. The destiny that designed them for each other, that meant them to be sharers in a common yearning for the happiness of their race, was but fulfilled. Everything lent it-

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self to this brief vision of love, which for so long had gathered strength as it penetrated into the depths of their hearts, and which this night had suddenly called into being. Their two souls met in this embrace so long deferred, and in it their love expanded like a perfect blossom. It was but the natural course of their existence, and no regret or remorse for it troubled their minds.

As Luc held Josine in his arms, in the calmness of that quiet room, he was conscious of an abiding consolation. He felt that through her his communion with the disinherited of the earth was attained. His union with them was sealed, for only through a woman's tenderness could he redeem humanity. Ah, what comfort she had brought him, this little working-woman, ill-treated and oppressed, whom he had first met dying of hunger, but who now came to him as the vision of relief and gladness. She had known the worst depths of degradation, and through this knowledge she would aid him to create a new world of joy and happiness. She was the one thing needful to accomplish his mission, for upon the day that he should have redeemed woman, the whole earth would be saved.

He said to her, softly:

"Give me your hand, Josine, your poor, maimed hand."

And she gave him the hand that lacked the index finger, the finger that had been destroyed in the running-gear of some machinery.

"It is so ugly," she murmured.

"Ugly, Josine! oh no! It is so dear to me that I kiss it with more devotion than any other part of your body."

He pressed his lips to the scar, and he covered the frail, mutilated little hand with caresses.

"Oh, Luc," she cried, "how you must love me, and how I love you!"

Without, Beauclair lay sunk in a heavy sleep, and the sound of its hammers, together with the echoes from the steel factories of La Crêcherie and the Pit, bore witness to a ceaseless nocturnal toil. The warfare was not yet

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ended; the terrible struggle had only gathered strength between yesterday and to-morrow. But in the midst of all its sufferings an episode of happiness had occurred; and whatever might be the burdens of the future, the immortal seed of mutual love and helpfulness had been sown, in the blessed hope of a future harvest.

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III

FROM this time forward, whenever some new disaster befell La Crêcherie, whenever Luc's efforts to establish a town founded upon labor, justice, and peace were impeded by the refusal of the men to support him, his cry was:

"It is because they do not love me! If they loved me everything would increase and prosper; everything would grow and expand like a plant in the sunshine."

This marked and painful period was distinctly one of stagnation, when the work upon which his heart was set of necessity stood still. In all human progress occur such periods of contention and of forced delay. There is, then, no further advance; there is even a retrograde movement, when all that has been previously accomplished seems to crumble into ashes, and the end in view appears wholly unattainable. It is in hours such as these that the firmness of soul and the indomitable faith in a final victory which characterizes the true hero are manifested.

The next day Luc made an effort to detain Ragu, who wished to break off his connection with the association, and to leave La Crêcherie, in order to return to the Pit. But he had to deal with an obstinate and vicious nature, which enjoyed the opportunity for inflicting injury, afforded by the fact that at this moment the whole industry was likely to be ruined by the defection of its workmen. In addition to this, there was another and a deeper motive at work, namely, the yearning that the slave feels for his servitude, a feeling which is rooted in the depths of his nature, and causes him to return, like a dog to his vomit, to the bitter poverty and all the other associations of his revolting past. In the cheerful neatness of his little house, surrounded

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with verdure, and basking in the sunshine, Ragu pined for the filthy alleys of old Beauclair, and its pestilent hovels reeking in the disease-laden atmosphere. Whenever he spent an hour in the large, airy hall of the Communal House, where alcohol was forbidden, he was haunted by the remembrance of the penetrating odor of Caffiaux's *cabaret*. The well-ordered arrangement of the co-operative shops was no less oppressive to him. It roused in him the desire to spend his money in his own way, among the shopkeepers of the Rue de Brias, whom he treated as extortioners, but with whom he took delight in quarrelling.

The more Luc persisted in showing him the foolishness of his departure, the more obstinate Ragu became, being possessed of the idea that if such anxiety was displayed about him, it was because his leaving would prove an injury.

"No, no, Monsieur Luc, the matter cannot be settled. Perhaps I am acting like a fool, but it does not seem so to me. You promised us wonderful things; we were all to become rich; but the fact is that we are earning no more than we did elsewhere, with annoyances to boot, according to my judgment."

This was so far true, that the system of division of profits employed at La Crêcherie had not yet resulted in payments to the individual that were sensibly larger than the wages at the Pit.

"We are earning a living," answered Luc, quickly, "and is not that all-sufficient when the future is secure? If I have asked any sacrifices of you, I have done so in the conviction that the happiness of all requires it. But we must have patience and courage and faith in the undertaking, and must do much work besides."

Ragu was incapable of being moved by such language. One expression only appealed to him, and at this he laughed maliciously.

"Oh, the happiness of all is a very fine sentiment, but I prefer to begin with my own happiness."

Luc then told him that he was free to do as he pleased;

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that the amount due him would be settled at once; and that he could go as soon as he chose. It was, indeed, not to his interest to keep an ill-disposed man whose presence would end by being a focus of contagion. But the departure of Josine rent his heart, and he felt a little ashamed when he discovered that he was displaying so much zeal to retain Ragu, only in order to retain her. The thought that she was returning into the sink of old Beauclair, into the hands of this man, who, under the influence of alcohol, would continue to abuse her, was insupportable to him. He pictured her to himself, again in the Rue des Trois Lunes, living in a filthy room, and once more the victim of a sordid, grinding poverty, while he himself no longer at hand to watch over her. And yet she was his own now, and he would have wished to be with her every minute, so as to assure her a happy life. The night following, she returned to visit him, and there was between them a heart-rending interview, made up of tears, vows, and impracticable projects. Wisdom prevailed, however; they must accept things as they stood, if they would avoid compromising the enterprise which was dear to them in common. Josine must accompany Ragu, for she could not refuse to do so without creating an embarrassing scandal; while Luc, remaining at La Crêcherie, would continue his efforts for the happiness of all, with the conviction that victory would some day reunite them. They were strong by reason of the inextinguishable love that existed between them. She promised that she would return to see him. But, in spite of this, what anguish of heart was his when she said farewell to him, and when, on the next day, he saw her leaving La Crêcherie, behind Ragu, who, with the assistance of Bourron, was pushing a hand-cart containing their meagre possessions!

Three days later Bourron followed Ragu, whom he had met during the intervening evenings at Caffiaux's. His comrade had jeered at him to such an extent in regard to the temperance drinks at the Communal House that he thought he was acting as a free man by returning to live in the Rue des Trois Lunes. His wife, Babette, after making

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one attempt to put him out of conceit with such an act of folly, made up her mind to resign herself to it, and accepted the situation with her customary gayety. Bah! everything would go on just as well as ever; her husband was a good man, in the main, and would see things straight sooner or later. So she laughed and jested while she dismantled her house, saying *au revoir* to her neighbors, instead of good-bye, for she could not believe that she would not return to that pretty garden where she had enjoyed herself so much. In particular she longed to bring back her daughter Marthe and her son Sébastian, who were making great progress at the school; and when Sœurette spoke of keeping them there she consented.

The worst part of the situation, however, was that other workmen succumbed to the contagion of bad example, and left, as Bourron and Ragu had done. Their defection was due to a lack of faith quite as much as to a want of love, and Luc now found himself called upon to face the cowardice, the faithlessness, and all the other evil tendencies of human nature with which those who labor for the happiness of others have to contend. Even in his intercourse with Bonnaire himself, who was always so loyal and so right-minded, he felt a certain tension. Bonnaire's domestic affairs were clouded by the daily complaints of La Toupe, whose vanity was still unsatisfied, for she had not yet been able to buy herself the silk dress and the watch for which she had been wishing since her earliest youth. Besides this, her never-ceasing regret that she had not been born a princess rendered her wholly antagonistic to all ideas of equality and community. She raised a perpetual tempest in the house, put father Linot on still shorter rations of tobacco, and hustled the two children, Lucien and Antoinette, about. There were two others now, Zoé and Severin, and this she considered a misfortune, for which Bonnaire was responsible, reproaching him for it ceaselessly, as if they were the results of his subversive ideas, of which she claimed to be the victim. Bonnaire preserved an external tranquillity, for he was accustomed to such outbreaks, and they simply saddened him.

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He never answered, even when she shrieked out that he was a poor blockhead and dupe, and that he would leave his bones at La Crêcherie.

Luc saw clearly, however, that Bonnaire was not with him heart and soul. He never gave occasion for fault-finding, but remained an active, accurate, conscientious workman, who set an example to his comrades. Yet, in spite of all this, there was in his attitude a disapprobation, together with a certain appearance of lassitude and discouragement. Luc suffered from this very much, and felt disheartened that such a man, for whom he entertained the utmost esteem, and whose heroism he knew, could become discouraged so quickly. If such a one as this lost faith, was it because the work was unworthy?

The two had an explanation one evening while sitting on a bench at the door of the works. They had met there by chance, just as the sun was setting in the peaceful sky, and sat down quietly to converse.

"It is perfectly true, monsieur," said Bonnaire, frankly, in answer to a question; "I have grave doubts of your success. You will remember, moreover, that I have never accepted your ideas, and that your attempt has always seemed to me difficult, from the stand-point of concessions. If I have lent myself to it, it is only as an experiment. But the further we go, the more I see that I was not mistaken. The experiment has been made, and now something else must be tried, of a wholly different character."

"What! the experiment already tried!" cried Luc; "we are only beginning it! It will require a long period, of several generations of men, perhaps, an effort extending over a hundred years of good-will and determination. And is it you, my friend, you who are so energetic and so brave, who lose heart so quickly?"

He looked at Bonnaire's broad, tranquil face, and at his breadth of shoulders, all of which bespoke strength and honesty. But the workman gently shook his head.

"No, no," he said, "good-will and determination will accomplish nothing here. The fault is in your method, which is too mild, and relies too much on man's good quali-

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ties. Your plan for the association of capital, talent, and labor will never work successfully, for it is impossible to establish anything solid and definite upon it. The evil we contend with has reached such a degree of abomination that there is no remedy for it but the red-hot cautery."

"What do you think should be done, then, my friend?"

"It is absolutely necessary that the people should take possession at once of the implements of labor, dispossess the middle class, and assume the disposition of capital themselves, in order to reorganize universal and obligatory labor."

And Bonnaire proceeded once more to expound his ideas. He had remained wholly devoted to collectivism, and Luc listened to him sadly, astonished at having produced no effect upon this thoughtful but somewhat obtuse mind. All that he had heard Bonnaire say in the Rue des Trois Lunes, on the night when he left the Pit, Luc found confronting him again, without the creed of the former having been in the slightest degree modified by the five years of communistic experience passed at La Crêcherie. The process of evolution was too slow; progress by co-operation solely would require too many years, and he, therefore, lost patience, and believed in nothing but immediate and violent revolution.

"What we do not take will never be given us," said he, in conclusion. "We must seize everything, in order to have anything."

A silence ensued. The sun had sunk below the horizon, the night-shift had resumed labor, and the sounds of their toil resounded from the interior of the works. This incessant continuance of labor filled Luc with an overpowering sadness, perceiving, as he did, that his enterprise was going to be compromised by the overhaste of the finest spirits to realize their social ideal. Is it not, he reflected, this very fierceness of contests between theories that often impedes and retards the accomplishment of purpose?

"I do not wish to discuss the subject with you again, my friend," said Luc, at length. "I do not believe that a decisive resolution would be possible, or, indeed, desirable,

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in the circumstances in which we find ourselves. I remain convinced that combination and co-operation, with the aid of syndicates, are the slow road which is to be preferred, and that it will conduct us in the end to the promised city. We have often talked of these things without convincing each other in the least. What good purpose would it serve to begin over again and sadden each other uselessly? All that I hope from you is that you will remain faithful to the house that we have founded together in the difficulties with which it is about to contend."

Bonnaire made an abrupt gesture of displeasure.

"Oh, Monsieur Luc, can you doubt me? You know very well that I am not a fair-weather friend, and when I remember that you once saved me from starvation, I am ready to eat my dry bread with you as long as it is needful to do so. Do not be afraid that I shall say to any one what I have just said to you. The matter is entirely between you and me. Besides, of course, I am not going to discourage our workmen by announcing to them our approaching ruin. Our interests are united, and will remain united until the walls tumble upon our heads."

Luc shook his hand with deep emotion, and the following week he was still more touched when he came unexpectedly upon a scene that took place in the large hall of the rolling-mills. He had been informed that two or three badly disposed workmen were trying to entice away as many of their comrades as possible in imitation of Ragu; and when he himself arrived, hoping to re-establish order, he saw Bonnaire, standing in the midst of the mutineers, and haranguing them with great vehemence. Luc stopped and listened. Bonnaire was bravely upholding the position; he was saying everything that ought to be said, was recalling the benefits bestowed by the house, and was quieting alarm by the promise of a better future, should all keep bravely at work. His appearance was so grand and imposing that the malecontents were pacified, their dissatisfaction being soothed by hearing such reasonable things from the mouth of one of their own number. There was no further talk of breaking up the association,

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and the defections were checked. Luc never forgot the spectacle of Bonnaire as he stood, a faithful giant, pacifying the disaffected by his easy, tranquil manner, and showing himself a real hero of labor, respectful of the needs of the business because he fully appreciated them. He would have considered himself a coward to desert his post during a struggle for the happiness of others, even if his own opinion was to the effect that the struggle should be carried on in another and a different manner.

When Luc thanked him, however, his heart was wrung afresh by the composed answer:

"It is perfectly natural; I have done nothing more than my duty; but, nevertheless, Monsieur Luc, it will be absolutely necessary for me to convert you to my ideas. Otherwise, all of us will end by dying of hunger."

A few days after this another incident completed Luc's depression. He was just descending from the blast-furnace with Bonnaire, when they had occasion to pass before the kilns that belonged to Lange. The potter had obstinately refused to leave the tiny bit of land lying under the rocky hill-side, which had been made over to him, and which he had enclosed with a low wall of rough stone. Luc had vainly endeavored to entice him away by offering him the superintendency of the crucible manufactory which he had been obliged to establish. Lange wished to remain free, and to own, as he said, neither God nor master. He therefore continued to manufacture common pottery at the back of his cave, and to carry about his pots, dishes, and earthen vessels of all kinds in a little cart, by means of which he conveyed them to the markets and fairs of the neighboring villages. He himself dragged the cart, and Barefoot pushed it; and on this particular evening both were just returning from one of their journeys as Luc and Bonnaire made their appearance before the door of the enclosure.

"Well, Lange," inquired the former, cordially, "how is business?"

"Good enough for us to have bread, Monsieur Luc. You know that is all that I ask."

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Lange did not carry his pottery about for sale, in fact, unless he was actually in want of food. At other times he forgot himself, in the potteries that were not for sale, and remained for hours looking at these, with eyes full of imagination, like a rustic poet, whose passion is to give life to inanimate objects. Even the rudest utensils that he manufactured displayed an originality, a purity of outline, and a grace at once simple and dignified. He who was himself sprung from the people had discerned by instinct the primitive beauty of the people, that beauty of the humble domestic object that is born of perfect proportions, and of complete adaptation to the purpose for which the object is to be used.

This peculiar beauty struck Luc forcibly as he examined some unsold articles in the little cart. He was also filled with an admiration mingled with astonishment at the sight of Barefoot, who was a dark, beautiful girl, with the graceful and muscular limbs of a wrestler, and the small, firm throat of a warrior.

"It must be hard work," said he, addressing himself to her, "to push this all day." But she was a silent person, and contented herself with smiling and looking at him with her great, wild eyes, while the potter answered for her:

"Nonsense! We rest in the shade on the side of the road whenever we meet a spring. It is all the same to us, is it not, Barefoot, so long as we are happy?"

She turned her eyes towards the speaker, filled with a boundless adoration for him who was to her a master all-powerful and good, a savior, and a God. Then, without uttering a word, she ended by pushing the little cart into the enclosure and placing it under a shed.

Lange himself followed her with a look of profound tenderness. He made a pretence of using her harshly sometimes, as though she were a Bohemian picked up on the road, whose master he intended to remain. But at present it was she who was mistress. He loved her with a passion that he would not own, and which he concealed under an uncouth peasant manner. This little,

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dumpy man, with a square head, surrounded by a thicket of tangled hair and beard, had really a disposition of infinite tenderness and affection.

He turned suddenly towards Luc, whom he affected to treat as a comrade, and rejoined, with brutal frankness:

"Well, the happiness of all does not seem to work, then? Those imbeciles who consent to shut themselves up in those barracks of yours are not willing to be happy in your way?"

He had been in the habit of jeering at Luc whenever they met, in regard to the latter's attempt to establish Fourierist communism at La Crêcherie. And, as Luc contented himself with smiling, he added:

"I confidently expect that before six months are out you will come over to us anarchists. Once more, I repeat to you, everything is rotten, and there is nothing more to be done but to destroy the old society with bombs."

Bonnaire, who up to this moment had kept silence, interrupted, brusquely:

"Oh! with bombs! That is rank foolishness!"

He, who was a pure collectivist, did not favor attempts to propagandize by unlawful means, although he entirely believed in the necessity of a general and violent revolution.

"How, you idiot?" cried Lange, much offended. "Do you imagine that your precious socialization of the implements of labor will ever take place unless the middle class are made ready for it? It is your disguised capitalism that is rank foolishness. Begin, then, by destroying everything, in order to reconstruct everything."

They continued arguing in this fashion, the anarchy of one disputing with the collectivism of the other, and Luc had nothing to do but to listen to them. The gulf fixed between Lange and Bonnaire was as wide as that between Bonnaire and himself.

In listening to them one would have believed, from the bitterness and violence of their quarrel, that they were men of different races, at enmity for ages, and ready to devour each other alive, in the absence of any possibility

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of mutual understanding. Yet, in spite of this, they were equally desirous of the happiness of others. They were united in striving for the same end, namely, justice, peace, and organized labor, which should give daily bread and a share in the joy of existence to all. But the moment that they began to discuss the means to this end, what violence, what aggressive, murderous hatred they displayed! Were these stony contests to occur at every halt, among brothers on a march along the rough road of progress, over the simple question as to whether it were necessary to turn to the right hand or to the left, notwithstanding they were both inspired with the same desire for freedom.

"Every one is free to act in his own way," said Lange, at last. "Sleep peacefully, comrade, in your *bourgeois* corner, if that is what suits you. For myself, I understand clearly what I must do. Those little presents, those little pots that we are going some fine day to leave with the sub-prefect, with the mayor, with the judge, and with the *curé,* they will do their work; is it not so, Barefoot? That will be a famous excursion, hey? Ah, with what delight we shall push the cart that morning?"

The tall, beautiful girl had returned, and was standing on the threshold, where she remained, like the sculptured figure of a queen, among the red earthen vessels in the enclosure. Her eyes flamed afresh, and she had the smile of the devotee who is ready to follow her master even to the lengths of crime.

"She is in it, comrade," added Lange, quietly, with his manner in which moroseness and tenderness were mingled. "She is helping me."

After Luc and Bonnaire had left him, without any anger, despite their lack of agreement, they continued their walk for a few minutes in silence. Then the latter experienced the need of resuming his arguments, in order to demonstrate once more that there was no safety possible outside of the doctrine of collectivism. He damned the anarchists as he damned the Fourierists, the latter because they did not immediately seize upon all capital, and

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the former because they would suppress it by force. And Luc was obliged once more to reflect that a reconciliation between the two would be possible only in the city of his dreams, when all parties were lost in the realized vision of the community. Then there would be no more dissensions in regard to the best direction to be followed, there would be but one desired end for all, and brotherly kindness would reign. But he felt a mortal uneasiness at the thought of the long road that was still to be travelled, and an extreme dread of seeing these men, who should be as brothers, destroy each other, simply because they hindered one another upon the march.

These continual collisions depressed Luc greatly, for they were so many impediments to his own work. As soon as two men wished to act, they misunderstood each other. Whenever he was alone, the cry, which always lay latent in his heart, burst from his lips:

"They do not love me! If they did but love me, everything would increase and prosper; everything would grow and expand like a plant in the sunshine."

Morfain, also, was causing him annoyance. Luc had endeavored, without success, to civilize the former a little by inducing him to abandon his cave in the rock and come down to live in one of the little, well-lighted houses of La Crêcherie. But the master-founder had always obstinately refused, under the pretext that he was nearer to his work up above, and, therefore, had it more completely under his eye. Luc allowed himself to be entirely led by Morfain, and left the management of the blast-furnace completely to him, the latter being still carried on in the old-fashioned way, pending the advent of the batteries of electric furnaces, upon which Jordan was still incessantly at work. The true cause of Morfain's obstinacy, however, his real reason for refusing to come down and live among the men who peopled the new town, was the contempt, which amounted, indeed, almost to hatred, in which he held them. He himself represented the Vulcan of primitive times, the conqueror of fire, the workman whose spirit has been crushed by long slavery, who gives

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his exertions like a hero of resignation, and who ends by loving the gloomy grandeur of the galleys to which fate has condemned him; and to such as he there was nothing but irritation in these works, where the employés expected eventually to be gentlemen, and where the use of their arms was to be replaced by machines that would soon be run by children. All this effort to economize labor and to contend no longer with fire and iron seemed to him petty and miserable. It was entirely beyond his comprehension, and he shrugged his shoulders, without speaking during the long silences that he sometimes maintained for entire days. He therefore remained all alone in his pride upon the side of the mountain, reigning over the blast-furnace, and superintending the works where, regularly, four times in every twenty-four hours, the dazzling tappings crowned with flames appeared.

There was still another reason for Morfain's prejudice against the new times, of which he wished to remain in ignorance, to such an extent that their very breath should not even lightly touch his rough skin, tanned by labor. And in this respect the heart of the taciturn man must have bled frightfully. His daughter, Ma Bleue, whose blue eyes were for him the blue of heaven, that majestic and beautiful creature who, since the death of her mother, had been his beloved housekeeper, had gone astray. On learning this he first flew into a passion, and then pardoned her, for he said to himself that some day she would be married. But when she confessed to him the name of her lover, and he learned that it was Achille Gourier, the son of the mayor, he had no further pardon to give. Their attachment had lasted for years, and their meeting-place had been along the mountain paths of the Monts Bleuses, with their fragrant beds of thyme and lavender, under the free expanse of the starry night. Achille, disgusted and wearied by the *bourgeoisie* to which he belonged, had come to an open rupture with his family, and entreated Luc to employ him at La Crêcherie, where he became a draughtsman. He broke all ties, and resolved to love where and how he pleased, and to work

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for the woman of his choice, showing himself, in fact, the converted offspring of old social conditions, in conforming himself to the requirements of a new age. Morfain's chief cause of distress was that Ma Bleue had been led astray by a gentleman; and it was this, indeed, which made him drive her out in disgrace, for he recognized nothing in her case that was not rebellion and deviltry. The ancient social edifice that he respected must be crumbling to pieces when a girl who was so beautiful and so good had herself shaken one of its foundations by listening to and, perhaps, even enticing the son of the mayor.

Ma Bleue, driven out of her home, had naturally taken refuge with Achille, and Luc was obliged to intervene. The two young people had no idea of marrying. They saw no reason for it, since they were perfectly sure of loving each other and of never deserting each other. Besides, it would be necessary, if they were to be married, that Achille should obtain the legal consent of his father, and this seemed to him a useless and vexatious complication. Sœurette, feeling that the good reputation of La Crêcherie for morality was at stake, urged a legal marriage very strongly, but in vain, and Luc at length advised her to close her eyes to the situation. Morfain, however, did not accept it thus easily, and Luc went to see him one evening in order to reason with him. Since he had turned his daughter out-of-doors, the master-founder had lived alone with his son Petit-Da, the two between them managing the household affairs of their rocky cave. This evening, after they had finished their dinner of soup, they remained seated on their wooden stools before their rude oak table, which they had hewn out of the wood themselves, while the feeble lamp that lighted the room projected their colossal shadows upon the smoky walls.

"Nevertheless, father," said Petit-Da, "the world moves on. It is impossible to remain stationary."

Morfain shook the heavy table with a blow of his fist, and said:

"I have lived as my father lived, and your duty was to live as I live."

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The two men did not usually exchange half a dozen words a day. But for some time a feeling of constraint had been growing between them, and although they did everything to avoid discussions, these would sometimes arise. The son knew how to read and write, and was somewhat more in touch with the march of progress, of which the echoes extended even to the depths of these rocky fastnesses. But the father, in his glorious obstinacy, being nothing more than a sturdy workman, whose effort sufficed to control fire and conquer iron, flew into a violent passion upon finding that his race was becoming debased by all this science and all these useless ideas.

"If your sister had not read books, and had not taken an interest in what was going on down below, she would still be with us. . . . Ah! that new town, that accursed town, that has taken her away from us!"

This time his fist did not descend upon the table; he stretched it out through the open door into the darkness of night, in the direction of La Crêcherie, the lights of which were twinkling like stars at the bottom of the rocky slope.

Petit-Da respectfully refrained from answering, but his conscience was a little troubled, for he knew that his father had been annoyed with him ever since he had met Honorine, the daughter of Caffiaux, the keeper of the *cabaret*. Honorine, who was small, slender, and dark, with a gay, sprightly face, was passionately in love with this gentle giant, who in his turn found her charming. It was Honorine who was at the bottom of this evening's difference between father and son, and the direct attack which the latter expected was finally made.

"And you," asked Morfain, abruptly, "when are you going to leave me?"

This suggestion of separation appeared to throw Petit-Da into confusion.

"Why, then, father, do you wish that I should leave you?"

"Oh! when there is a girl in the case there is nothing to be looked for but quarrels and destruction of peace.

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Who is it, then, that you have chosen? Are such marriages reasonable, when they confuse classes, turn the world inside out, and end everything? . . . I have lived too long."

The son, gently and tenderly, strove to appease his father. He did not deny his love for Honorine, but he spoke of it like a reasonable person who is determined to be patient as long as is necessary. Future events would decide. What harm was there in the young girl and himself exchanging a friendly good-day when they met? Their not being in the same social world did not prevent their being mutually attracted. And even though these different worlds should become slightly mixed, would they not derive advantage from this by knowing each other better and loving each other more?

But Morfain, beside himself with anger and bitterness, suddenly arose, and, standing under the rock which formed the ceiling, and which he almost touched with his forehead, said, with a splendidly tragic gesture:

"Clear out! clear out! as soon as you please. Do as your sister did, spit upon everything that is respectable, plunge into profligacy and folly. You are no longer my children; I no longer recognize you; some one must have changed you. Leave me to my solitude in this cave, where I earnestly hope that the rocks themselves will bring about an end by falling and crushing me."

Luc, who was about entering, had paused upon the threshold and heard these last words. He was very much moved by them, for he had a great esteem for Morfain. He reasoned with him for some time. But the latter, as soon as the master made his appearance, concealed his vexation, so as to be no longer anything but the workman, the submissive subordinate, devoted to his task. He did not even permit himself to judge Luc, who was, nevertheless, the first cause of all these abominations, which were upsetting the whole country, and from which he was suffering.

"Do not make yourself uneasy, Monsieur Luc, because I have my own ideas, and because I get angry if they

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are opposed. It happens very seldom, for you know that I talk very little. You may be very sure that it does not result in any harm to the work. My eyes are always on the alert, and not a tapping takes place at which I am not present. When one's heart is sad, one works all the harder for it."

But when Luc endeavored once more to bring peace into this family, where it had been destroyed by the evolution of which he was himself the apostle, the master-founder again flew into a passion.

"No, no! That's enough; to hell with peace! If you came up here to speak to me of Ma Bleue, Monsieur Luc, you have done wrong, because it is the sure means of making things worse. Let her stay where she is, and I will stay where I am!"

Then apparently wishing to break off the conversation, he spoke hastily of something else, and imparted a piece of bad news, which was, perhaps, a strong element in his own bad humor.

"I was intending to go down at once, in order to tell you that I went to the mine this morning, and that all hope of finding that rich lode of ore again has to be given up, although I would have sworn that it would certainly have been met with again at the bottom of the gallery which I pointed out. But what would you have? It seems as though an evil fate had been cast over everything that we have undertaken for some time past. Nothing succeeds."

These words fell upon Luc's ear like the knell of his great expectations. Morfain's speech disheartened him completely. The founder, with his enormous head, his broad face furrowed and reddened by the fire, his flaming eyes, distorted mouth, and yellowish red skin seemed like the last inhabitant of an extinct world. Then Luc took leave, and, as he descended the hill-side, oppressed with the deepest sadness, he asked himself how great would be the mass of continually increasing ruins upon which he would be obliged to build his city.

Even at La Crêcherie itself, in his calm and tender in-

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tercourse with Sœurette, Luc found cause for discouragement. She continued to receive the Abbé Marle, the school-master Hermeline, and Dr. Novarre, and showed so much delight at having her friend also to breakfast on these occasions that he had not the heart to refuse her invitations, in spite of the discomfort caused him by the continual disputes of the school-master and the priest. Sœurette, whose conscience was void of offence, suffered no annoyance, believing him to be interested, while Jordan, always enveloped in his wraps and dreaming of some experiment begun, listened with a vague smile.

All this was especially marked one Tuesday, when they had left the table and were sitting in the little salon. Hermeline had attacked Luc in regard to the instruction that Sœurette was giving to the children at La Crêcherie, which she did in five classes, each containing both sexes, and in time taken from prolonged recreations and from the numerous hours passed in the apprentices' work-rooms. This new school, where a method diametrically opposed to his own was followed, had drawn off some of the school-master's pupils, and this he could not pardon. His angular face, with its bony forehead and thin lips, paled with restrained anger at the idea that any one could believe in any theory but his own.

"I am willing to accept the instruction of boys and girls together, although it seems to me most unsuitable. Even when the pupils of different sexes are separated, they have many bad instincts and evil imaginations, and it is most extraordinary that any one should conceive the idea of placing them together, by which means all that is undesirable is excited and stimulated. All this should be kept out of sight and attention diverted from it. But what I find it impossible to tolerate is that the authority of the master should be destroyed, and discipline wholly dispensed with, by the practice of appealing to the personality of these children and allowing them to direct their own actions according to their good pleasure. Did you not yourself tell me that each child follows his own inclination, devotes himself to whatever study he pleases, and is at liberty to

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choose his lesson? You call this stimulating energy; but what do you call studies in which they play all the time, where books are held in contempt, where the word of the master is not infallible, and where the time that is not spent in the garden is spent in the workshops, in planing wood and polishing iron? No doubt a manual trade is a good thing to teach, but there is a time for everything, and in my opinion the foundation should be laid by forcing as much grammar and as much mathematics as possible into the thick skulls of these idle little creatures with strokes of the hammer."

Luc had ceased to discuss such questions, for, having espoused the dogma of progress, and being in no wise inclined to relinquish it, he was weary of running counter to this intolerance of sectarianism and obstinate Catholicism. He contented himself, therefore, with replying quietly:

"Yes, we believe in the necessity of making work attractive, by changing the classical studies for continual object-lessons, and our aim is, before everything, to influence the wills of men."

Hermeline then burst out laughing.

"Well, and do you know what you are doing? You are preparing revolts by doing away with class distinctions. There is only one means of giving citizens to the State, and that is to manufacture them expressly for her, such as she needs them, so that they may be strong and glorious. Hence arises the necessity of instruction, systematized, disciplined, and calculated to serve the country, carried on according to the best recognized methods, in order to furnish the working-men, the professional men, and the public functionaries of whom she has need. In the absence of authority, there is no security for all this. I have proved it; I am a republican of the old school, a free-thinker, and an atheist. No one, I hope, could imagine that he detected in me a retrograde mind, but, nevertheless, what I have heard of your instruction, your elective system of education, drives me beside myself, because, under its action, before half a century is gone, there will be

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no more citizens, no more soldiers, no more national defenders. Yes, I defy you to produce any soldiers under your system of free choice; and, in case of war, how will the country be defended?"

"No doubt, in case of war, defence would be necessary," said Luc, without any emotion. "But what will be the use of soldiers on the day when there is no more war? You speak like Captain Jollivet, in the *Journal de Beauclair,* when he accuses us of being unpatriotic and traitors to the cause."

This mischievous touch of irony completed Hermeline's exasperation.

"Captain Jollivet," he exclaimed, "is a fool whom I despise! It is none the less true that you are making ready an ill-regulated generation, one in rebellion against the State, which will eventually lead the republic into the worst catastrophes."

"Liberty, truth, and justice are catastrophes, then?" said Luc, smiling.

Hermeline continued, however, painting a terrible picture of the social conditions of the future if the schools ceased to educate all citizens alike, and all for the service of the authoritative and centralized republic: without political discipline, without any possible administration, without State sovereignty, and with inordinate license, ending in the worst physical and moral debauchery. The Abbé Marle, who was listening, nodded his head approvingly, and could not resist the desire of immediately exclaiming:

"Ah! how right you are, and how well all that is expressed!"

His broad, full face, with regular features and an aquiline nose, beamed with delight at this furious attack against the social conditions now coming into existence, in which he felt that his God was condemned to be nothing more than the historic idol of a dead religion. He himself made the same accusations and prophesied the same disasters from the pulpit every Sunday. But he was less and less listened to, his church became emptier day by day,

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and he experienced a deep, unavowed grief, which caused him to shut himself up more and more in his narrow doctrine for consolation. Never had he shown himself more strictly adherent to the letter, and never had he treated his penitents more severely, as if he were desirous that this *bourgeois* world, over whose rottenness he spread the mantle of religion, should at least be engulfed in an attitude of righteousness. On the day that his church crumbled into dust he would be found at its altar, and his last mass should be finished under its ruins.

"It is very true," he said, "that the reign of Satan is nigh, from this bringing up of boys and girls together, this unchaining of all the evil passions, this destruction of authority, this driving of the kingdom of God from the face of the earth, as was done in pagan times. The picture which you have just drawn is so just that I do not know anything to add that would make it stronger."

Annoyed at being praised in this manner by the priest, with whom he had nothing in common, the school-master suddenly became silent, with his eyes fixed on the distance, and looking at the grass plot in the park as if he heard nothing.

"But," proceeded the Abbé Marle, "there is one thing which it is more impossible for me to pardon than the demoralizing instruction given in your schools, and that is that you have closed your doors to God, you have deliberately omitted to build a church in the midst of your new town, among so many beautiful and useful constructions. Is that because you expect to live without God? No State, up to this time, has been able to do so. A religion has always been found necessary for the government of men."

"I expect nothing of the sort," answered Luc. "Every man is free to believe as he pleases, and if a church has not been erected, it is because none of us has as yet felt the need of it. But if the faithful could be found to fill one, it could easily be built. It will always be optional with any group of citizens to join together for any purpose agreeable to themselves. As to the necessity of re-

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ligion in the government of men, that is, indeed, very real; but we do not wish to govern them; we wish, on the contrary, that they may live in perfect freedom in a free city. You see, Monsieur Abbé, it is not we who are destroying Catholicism; it is destroying itself; it is slowly dying a natural death, as religions necessarily die at the appointed period of human evolution, after having fulfilled their part in the world's history. Science is destroying all dogmas one by one; the religion of humanity is now born, and is going to conquer the world. What use would a Catholic church be at La Crêcherie when yours is already too large for Beauclair, when it is becoming more and more deserted, and when it will one of these days fall entirely to pieces?"

The priest, who was very pale, did not understand, and did not wish to understand. He confined himself to reiterating, with the obstinacy of the believer whose strength lies in simple affirmation, without reason or proof:

"If God is not with you, your defeat is certain. Believe what I tell you, and build a church."

Hermeline could now contain himself no longer. The priest's praises choked him, above all when they were accompanied with an inference as to the necessity of a religion. Therefore he exclaimed:

"Oh no, oh no, abbé, no church! Certainly, I do not make any secret of the fact that things here are not organized according to my taste. But if there is any one of these things that I do approve, it is the abandonment of all forms of established worship. Men must be governed —yes, but it will no longer be the priests in churches who will govern them, but us citizens in our mayors' offices. The churches will be converted into public granaries, for the storing of harvests."

The Abbé Marle became very much excited, and said that he would not permit sacrilegious words to be spoken in his presence. The dispute became so bitter that Dr. Novarre was obliged to interfere as usual. He had listened up to that moment with observant eyes and the acute air of a man naturally amiable and a little sceptical, who

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does not allow himself to be troubled by any exchange of words, no matter how violent; but he thought he perceived at this point that Sœurette was beginning to be grieved.

"Come, come, you are evidently almost of the same mind, since both of you wish to utilize the churches. The abbé will always be able to say mass therein, under the condition of leaving a corner for the fruits of the earth in years of great abundance. The good God would surely not condemn such an arrangement, whatever may be his religion."

Then he spoke of a new rose which he had produced, and which was of the purest white, with a dash of crimson in the centre. He had brought a cluster with him, and Sœurette, looking at them in a vase upon the table, smiled at their charm and perfume; but a feeling of sadness, nevertheless, lingered in her mind, at the virulence which was displayed in the quarrels that occurred at these Tuesday breakfasts, which would soon be no longer possible.

Only then did Jordan awake from his reverie. He had all along preserved an attentive air, as if he were listening, but as soon as he spoke it was plain that his mind was far away.

"You know," he said, "that in America a scientific electrician has just succeeded in storing up enough solar heat to produce electricity."

When Luc was left alone with Jordan, there was a prolonged silence. The heart of the former was oppressed by the thought of the poor men who were oppressing each other and tearing each other to pieces in their blind pursuit of happiness. As the progress of time showed him the difficulty of working for the common good, and convinced him that it must be done amid the antagonism of the very persons whom he wished to redeem, he was sometimes seized with a discouragement that he had not yet admitted, but which exhausted him bodily and mentally, in the same manner as great and unprofitable fatigue. For an instant his will staggered, almost to the point of failure.

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And on this day, also, he uttered his usual cry of distress:

"But they do not love me! If they loved me everything would increase and prosper; everything would flourish and expand like a plant in the sunshine."

One autumn morning, very early, a few days after this, Sœurette received a painful shock, which occasioned her the deepest distress. She was an early riser, and had gone to give some orders at a dairy which she had established for her children in her *crèche,* when the idea occurred to her, in following the terraced wall which ended at the cottage occupied by Luc, to cast a glance over the Combettes road, which the terrace overlooked. At the moment that she did so, the door of the cottage looking out upon the road having been half opened, she saw a woman come quietly out, a shadowy form which was almost immediately effaced in the rosy mist of the morning. But she had recognized the delicate, graceful figure, with its subtle charm, which, like a vision of infinite tenderness, was flying in the broad light of day. It was Josine, who was coming from Luc's house; and the fact of her leaving in this manner at sunrise showed that she must have passed the night therein.

Since Ragu had left La Crêcherie, Josine had returned to see Luc occasionally on nights when she was at liberty; and this night she had come to tell him that she could not return again, for fear of being surprised by the neighbors, who were watching her outgoings. The idea of lying and of concealing herself in order to devote herself to her god was so painful to her that she preferred to wait for the hour when she could claim his love in broad daylight. Luc understood her feeling, and resigned himself to it. But they had exchanged so many kisses, so many vows, and so many farewells, that it was already daylight when she tore herself away. The morning mists alone had slightly veiled her departure.

That Josine should come out of Luc's house at sunrise! This sudden revelation came upon Sœurette with the shock of a mortal catastrophe. She suddenly stood still, glued

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to the spot, as if the earth had opened before her feet. She was so stunned and such a tumult rose in her brain that she experienced nothing but confusion, without any clear sensation, or any possible reasoning. She did not continue her way, and forgot that she was going to the dairy to give an order. She suddenly turned and fled homeward, re-entered the house, rushed madly up to her room, shut herself in, and threw herself upon her unmade bed, with her hands over her eyes and ears, as if she would neither see nor hear. She did not weep; she knew nothing yet, and was a prey solely to extreme distress, mingled with infinite consternation.

Why then, should she suffer thus, in such a rending of her entire being? She had believed herself to be nothing more than Luc's very affectionate friend, his disciple and his aid, passionately devoted, like himself, to the work of justice and human happiness, which it was his dream to accomplish. She imagined that she enjoyed nothing more in his presence than the delightful pleasure of a fraternity of soul, without any suspicion of the birth of a deeper emotion. And yet she was all aflame and possessed of a burning fever because of the vision of that other woman passing out of Luc's house in the morning light. Did she love Luc, then? Did she desire him for herself? Why did she not perceive that such was the case until the day on which the misfortune occurred, and when it was much too late for her to inspire love in her turn? How severe was the blow to learn in so harsh a manner that she herself loved, when another had already taken her place, and driven her from a heart in which she might have enshrined herself, perhaps, as an adored and all-powerful queen. All the rest was of no consequence; she cared not how her love had been born and nourished, nor why she had, in spite of her thirty years, remained in ignorance of it, and had, up to that time, been perfectly content in the possession of Luc's friendship, without experiencing the pang of desire for a closer intimacy. Her tears flowed at last, and she sobbed over the brutality of the circumstance which had placed this obstacle abruptly between herself

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and the man to whom she had given her whole heart without being aware of it. The only thought that now occupied her was the question of what she could do in order to make herself loved, for now that she was conscious that she loved, and would never cease to love, it did not seem possible to her that she could not herself be loved. The existence of love once acknowledged seemed to burn her heart, and she felt as if she could not continue to live unless its smart was relieved by the balm of a reciprocated affection. But her ideas were all confusion, and she struggled with irresolute thoughts and undefined resolutions, after the manner of a mature woman who, having remained a child, is suddenly thrown into the torturing realities of life.

She remained thus for a long time, half conscious, with her face pressed into the pillow. The sun was already high and the morning far advanced, without her having found a practical solution in her constantly increasing emotion. The same problem obstinately recurred: What could she do to manifest her own affection and to inspire that of another? The remembrance of her brother suddenly occurred to her; it was he in whom she ought to confide, since he alone of all the world really understood her, and was well aware that her heart had never lied. He was a man, and he surely would comprehend; he would know what ought to be done when one feels the imperative need of happiness. Without any further reasoning she suddenly jumped out of bed and descended to the laboratory, like a child who has found a way out of some great trouble.

Jordan that very morning had met with a disastrous set-back. He had believed for some months that he had found a method of transmitting electrical power under perfect conditions of safety and economy. This was to burn the coal as it came from the shaft, and conduct the electricity without any waste, and thus reduce the net cost considerably. He had spent four years of research upon this problem, though sorely impeded by the various ailments that attacked his delicate person. He utilized

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what strength he had as well as he could; he slept a great deal, wrapped up in his coverings, and methodically occupied all the rare hours which he thus conquered from unkind nature in developing his method. And by making the most that he could out of that ungrateful instrument, his miserable body, he succeeded in accomplishing a formidable amount of work. The embarrassing crisis through which La Crêcherie was passing was concealed from him, so as not to disturb him. He believed that everything there was going on well, for he was incapable of noticing things or of taking an interest in them, being continually shut up in his laboratory and occupied at his work, which, to him, was the only thing that existed in the world. This very morning he had begun to work early, feeling his intelligence clear, and wishing to turn it to account in a final experiment. The latter had totally failed, for he had suddenly encountered an unforeseen obstacle, an error of calculation, a neglected detail, which suddenly assumed a destructive importance, and postponed indefinitely the long-sought solution of the question of his electrical furnaces.

It was a complete collapse. The immense amount of labor already accomplished was entirely unproductive, and an equally large amount would still be necessary. He had just wrapped himself up again in his coverings, in the vast and desolate room, and was about to stretch himself out in the arm-chair in which he had passed so many hours, when his sister entered. When he saw her pallor and her loss of composure he became greatly uneasy, although he had borne the shock of his own disappointment unmoved, like a man whom nothing could discourage.

"What is the matter, dear?" he asked. "Are you suffering?"

His demand for confidence did not embarrass her. She answered without hesitation, like a child whose heart reveals itself in a sob:

"I am, dear brother. I love Luc, and he does not love me. I am very unhappy."

Then, in her frank and simple manner, she related the

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whole story. She told how she had seen Josine come out of Luc's house, and how this had caused her such intense grief that she had come to him for consolation and relief. She loved Luc, and Luc did not love her.

Jordan listened in stupefaction, as if she had told him of some extraordinary and unexpected interruption to the laws of nature.

"You love Luc!" he repeated; "you love Luc!"

Love—why love? That love should come to visit this adored sister, whom he had always seen beside him like a second self, stunned him. The idea that she should fall in love, and that she should be unhappy in consequence, had never occurred to him. All this was a need of which he was ignorant, a world into which he had never entered. His embarrassment, therefore, became very great—so candid was he himself and so totally ignorant in such a matter as this.

"Oh, tell me, brother," cried Sœurette, "why should Luc love Josine? Why is it not I whom he loves?"

She was sobbing now, and had clasped her arms round his neck and laid her head on his shoulder, in the grief that rendered her forlorn. What could he say to her that would direct and console her?

"I do not know, dear sister," he answered, "I do not know. He doubtless loves her simply because he does. There cannot be any other reason. He would be loving you had he loved you first."

And this was, indeed, the truth. Luc loved Josine because she was a woman of charm and passion, whom he had met when in a state of suffering that aroused all the tenderness of his heart. And then she possessed beauty, that gift which eternally inspires the divine thrill of love.

"But, brother, he knew me before he knew her. Why did he not love me first?"

Jordan, more and more embarrassed by these questions and very much moved, tried with great simplicity to find kind and considerate answers.

"Perhaps because he lived among us like a friend and brother, until he came to feel like a brother towards you."

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He looked at her for a moment as he ceased speaking, regarding her closely as she clung to him, so thin, so frail, and with so insignificant a face. She had no power to inspire love, in spite of the charm of manner which came from her gentleness and goodness. She was too pale and too sad, like all those who spend their lives in silent devotion. Certainly she had never been anything to Luc but an intelligent, kindly, and agreeable companion.

"Do you not see, dear sister, that if he has become your brother, like myself, he cannot love you with the love that he gives Josine? It would never enter his mind. But he loves you very much, all the same, just as I do."

This speech caused a revolt in Sœurette's soul. A revulsion of her entire affectionate being made her cry out with a renewed outburst of sobs:

"No, no, he does not love me much; he does not love me at all. To love a woman is not to love her as a brother does. I see that very well when I suffer as I am suffering now from the knowledge that he is really lost to me. Although I knew nothing of these things but a little while ago, I understand them now, because I know what I am undergoing through them."

Jordan was greatly moved, and was obliged to restrain the tears that rose to his eyes.

"Dear sister, dear little sister," said he, "you give me the utmost pain; and it is scarcely reasonable to make yourself really ill from such a cause. I hardly know you—you who are so composed and so quiet, you who understand so entirely what firmness of soul it is necessary to oppose to the miseries of existence."

Then he attempted to reason with her.

"Let us consider the matter. You have no reproach to make to Luc?"

"Oh, no, none! I know that he has much affection for me. We are very great friends."

"Then what further do you want? He loves you as much as he can, and you are wrong to be angry with him."

"But I am not angry. I feel no ill-will against any one; I am conscious of nothing but suffering."

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Her words were cut short by sobs, a new surge of distress overwhelmed her and wrung from her the cry:

"Why does he not love me? Why does he not love me?"

"If he cannot give you the love with which you wish to be loved, dear sister, it is because he does not understand you sufficiently. No, he does not understand you as I understand you. He does not know that you are the best, the most kind-hearted, the most devoted, the most loving of women. You would have been to him a companion and helpmate that would have made his life easier and happier; but the other one has stepped in with her beauty, and this must be to him a very powerful attraction, since he has followed her without observing you, you who, nevertheless, loved him so well. There is nothing for you to do but to become resigned."

He had taken her in his arms, and was now kissing her hair. But she still struggled against the inevitable.

"No, no; I cannot become resigned!"

"Yes, you will become resigned, for you are too good and too intelligent not to do so. Some day you will forget."

"Oh, no; that is impossible; never!"

"I am wrong; I do not ask you to forget. Keep the remembrance in your heart, since no one else will suffer from it. But I do ask you to become resigned, because I well know that the element of resignation has always existed in you, and that you are capable of submission, even to the point of renunciation and of sacrifice. Reflect, then, on all the disasters that would occur should you rebel or should you speak. Our life would be shattered, our work would be ruined, and you would suffer a thousand times more."

She interrupted him wildly.

"Very well, then; let life be shattered, let the work be ruined! I, at least, shall be happy. It is unkind of you, brother, to speak to me thus. You are an egoist."

"An egoist, when I think only of you, my adored sister? Just at this moment your whole nature is exas-

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perated by suffering. And how bitter would be your remorse should I allow you to destroy everything? Tomorrow you would find life unbearable amid the ruin that you had created. My poor, dear love, you will become resigned; your happiness will rest upon self-abnegation and pure tenderness."

Tears stifled him, and the brother and sister mingled their sobs. This controversy between the two, both so ingenuous and affectionate, exhibited a most beautiful example of fraternal love. Then Jordan repeated, in accents of the deepest pity, tempered with infinite affection:

"You will become resigned; you will become resigned."

She still protested, but in doing so she gave vent to the common plaint of poor, wounded human nature to those who seek to ease its pain.

"Oh, no! I wish to suffer. I cannot, I will not, become resigned."

Luc breakfasted with the Jordans this morning, and when, at half-past eleven, he joined them in the laboratory, he found the brother and sister still agitated, and showing traces of emotion. But he was himself so distressed, downcast, that he observed nothing. His farewells with Josine and the necessity of their separation had filled him with real despair. It seemed as though his last stronghold had been destroyed when the love that he believed necessary to his mission was taken away from him. If he did not save Josine he would never be able to save the wretched people to whom he had given his heart. From the time that he arose, all the obstacles that were impeding his progress had risen up before him, and appeared insurmountable. He had had a gloomy vision of La Crêcherie on the point of destruction and already destroyed; he even began to feel that it would be folly to hope still to save it. The men who belonged to it were preying upon each other; it was impossible to establish any fraternity among them, and all human fatalities were in league against the work. He had suddenly lost faith, and in doing so became a prey to the most frightful crisis of discouragement that he had yet undergone. All that was

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heroic in him was wavering, and in his present frame of mind, which exaggerated all evils, he was nearly ready to renounce his task, in his fear of approaching defeat.

Sœurette, observing his distress, had the divine tenderness to become uneasy.

"Are you unhappy, my friend?"

"Yes," he answered. "I am not very well; I have passed a hideous morning. Ever since I rose I have learned of nothing but misfortunes."

She did not dwell upon the matter further, but looked at him with increasing anxiety, asking herself what could be the nature of his distress, when he loved and was beloved in turn. To conceal in some degree her own extreme emotion she seated herself at her little work-table, and made a pretence of taking notes for her brother; while the latter, with an exhausted appearance, had stretched himself once more upon his easy-chair.

"Then, my good Luc," said he, "we are both in the same boat; for I got up this morning very well satisfied, and I, also, have met with disasters that have left me prostrate."

Luc walked about for a moment, his face clouded, and without saying a word. He passed backward and forward, stopping sometimes before the high window, and casting a glance upon La Crêcherie and upon the infant town, the roofs of which spread out before him. At length he could no longer restrain the tide of his despair, and he spoke:

"My friend, I feel that I must tell you something. It has been thought best that your researches should not be disturbed by the knowledge that our affairs are going very badly at La Crêcherie. Our workmen are leaving us, and disunion and revolt have broken forth among them in consequence of eternal misunderstandings caused by selfishness and hatred. The whole of Beauclair is in commotion; the tradesmen, and even the workmen themselves, whose habits of life we disturb, are making existence so hard for us that our situation is becoming more alarming every day. In short, affairs seem to me now to be desperate, and I admit that everything looks dark to me this morning. I

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see that we are lost, and I can no longer hide from you the disaster in which we are involved."

Jordan listened in astonishment. He remained perfectly composed, however, and even smiled slightly.

"Do you not exaggerate a little, my friend?" said he.

"Let us admit, for argument's sake, that I do exaggerate, that ruin is not imminent. I should none the less consider myself acting a dishonest part did I not forewarn you of the fear that I have of approaching ruin. When I asked you for land and money for the work of social redemption of which I dreamed, did I not promise you a good investment, as well as a fine and worthy action? And it is plain now that I have deceived you, and that your fortune is going to be swallowed up in the worst of failures. How could it be otherwise than that I should be haunted by the most fearful remorse?"

Jordan made an effort to interrupt him with a gesture, as though to say that money was of no consequence. But he continued:

"I am speaking not only of the large sums already lost, but of those which are necessary every day to prolong the struggle. I dare not ask any more of you, for although I am able and willing to sacrifice myself wholly, I have no right to involve you in my ruin, you and your sister."

He let himself fall into a chair, his knees giving way, and his whole appearance that of complete exhaustion; while Sœurette, who had grown very pale, and was still seated before her little table, her gaze fastened on the two men, awaited the outcome with the deepest emotion.

"Well, yes," resumed Jordan, with his tranquil voice, "things are certainly going very badly. For all that, however, your idea was a good one, and you finally convinced me. I have never disguised the fact from you that I took no interest in political and social experiments, being convinced that science alone is really revolutionary, and that it is that alone that will complete the evolution of the future, by which man will be led to absolute truth and justice. But your idea of consolidation of interests and responsibilities was so beautiful. I looked from that

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window after my hours of work and saw your town growing with much interest. It gave me great pleasure, and I said to myself that I was working for it, and that one day electricity would be its great power — its active and beneficent industrial power. Must, then, all these hopes be abandoned?"

At these words Luc could not repress a cry of utter despair:

"My energy is spent; my courage has deserted me, and my faith has vanished. Everything is at an end, and I have come to tell you that I shall abandon everything rather than ask of you any further sacrifice. Do you suppose, my friend, that I would have the audacity to ask from you the money that we should still require, even should you venture to let me have it?"

Never had so heartrending a cry of despair come from the breast of a man. It was the evil day, the dark hour, that all heroes and all reformers know so well; the time when the divine inspiration is withdrawn, when their mission is obscured, and when success appears impossible. There is a transient defeat and a momentary cowardice, the endurance of which is fearful.

Jordan had resumed his tranquil smile. He did not make an immediate answer to the question that Luc addressed to him with so much distress in regard to the large sums of money that would still be needed. With a motion as if he were chilly, he once more drew the coverings over his frail limbs, and then said, quietly:

"You must know, my good friend, that I myself am very far from being happy. I have this very morning met with a real disaster. You will remember my discovery of a method of transmitting electric power at a low price and without any waste? Well, I was deceived. I am really not in possession of what I believed that I had. This morning a control experiment convinced me that it will be necessary to begin all over again. This means that the labor of years must be repeated. You will readily understand that it is very trying to meet with such defeat when one believed himself certain of victory."

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Sœurette had turned towards him, overwhelmed at the news of this set-back, of which she had been in ignorance up to this moment. At the same time, Luc, moved with pity out of his own despondency, extended his hand in order to shake Jordan's in fraternal sympathy. The latter alone remained calm, except for the slight feverish trembling that was habitual with him when he was overworked.

"What are you going to do about it, then?" asked Luc.

"What am I going to do, my good friend? I shall apply myself once more to work. I shall begin over again to-morrow, and I shall take up the investigation from its starting-point, since it must be entirely done over again. The matter is very simple, and it is plain that there is nothing else to be done. You understand, of course, that one never gives up what he has undertaken. If the work in hand requires twenty years, thirty years, or an entire lifetime, such time must be given to it. If we find that we have been mistaken, we retrace our steps and travel over the road already traversed as often as is necessary. Impediments and obstacles occasion halts only, which must always arise from the inevitable difficulties of the route. A piece of work is a child whose life is sacred, and it is a criminal act not to bring it into existence. It is a part of one's own being; we have no right to object to its creation; we owe it our whole strength, our whole soul, our flesh, and our spirit. We should be ready to die of our work, if it exhausts us, as a mother sometimes dies on account of the child whom she is bringing into the world. And if our work does not cost us our life, then, when it is accomplished, and stands complete, living and whole, there is only one thing for us to do, and that is to begin over again upon some other work without pausing, and so to continue, one labor following another, so long as our strength continues and we are in possession of intelligence and vigor."

While Jordan was speaking, he seemed to become large and strong, as though his belief in human effort fortified him against all discouragement, and he was secure of victory, even though such victory should cost him the last

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drop of blood in his veins. And Luc, who was listening to him, felt himself inspired by the current of indomitable energy that issued from this fragile being.

"Labor! labor!" continued Jordan, "there is no other power. If one has faith in his work, he is invincible. And it is so easy to create a world. All that is necessary is to return each morning to our work, to add another stone to the stones of the monument that have already been laid, and by this means to build as high as the length of life will permit, without haste, and by the systematic use of the physical and intellectual energies at our disposal. Why should we distress ourselves about to-morrow when it is we ourselves who make it, thanks to our labor of to-day. To-morrow we reap what our efforts of to-day have sown. Ah, it is only labor, sacred and holy, labor the creator and the savior, that is my life itself, my only reason for living!"

His gaze was lost in the distance, and he was speaking now only for himself and repeating that hymn of labor which in all his moments of great emotion recurred constantly to his lips. His continued existence was due only to his having put into his life a piece of work towards the accomplishment of which he had adjusted all the functions of life. He was very sure that death would not overtake him until his work was finished. Whoever gives himself up entirely to some work finds in it a guide and a support like the very regulator of the heart that beats in his breast. There is for him an end in existence, and to meet its claims his health is regulated until an equilibrium is established from which springs the only real human enjoyment, that of action adequately fulfilled. Jordan, however ill he might have been, had never entered his laboratory without finding relief therein. How many times had he begun to work with aching limbs and a heavy heart, and each time his labor had effected a cure. His rare moments of doubt or discouragement occurred only in his hours of enforced idleness. Labor with him sustained its creator; it had no terrors for him, and it became exhausting to him only when he was forced to abandon it.

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He turned suddenly towards Luc, and concluded by saying to him, with his kindly smile:

"Look you, my friend, if you let La Crêcherie die, you will die because of La Crêcherie. The work is your very life, and you must live until its completion."

Luc, who was standing upright, felt a sudden expansion of his whole being. All that he had just heard, this exhibition of faith in the power of labor, this passionate love of work for its own sake, came to him like a heroic inspiration, and gave him back all his faith and all his strength. In his hours of lassitude and uncertainty he had felt nothing like this outburst of energy, which seemed to pass to him from his friend, from that poor sickly frame, whence emanated such a ray of peace and certainty. At every moment the charm increased; a wave of courage rose high in him, and he felt no longer anything but impatience to return again to the struggle.

"Ah!" exclaimed he, "you are right; I am a coward. I am ashamed of having despaired. The happiness of humanity lies only in the glorification of labor, in the reorganization of labor as a savior. It is upon that that our town must be founded. But the money, all the money that must still be risked?"

Jordan, exhausted by the passion which he had thrown into his words, drew the blankets more closely about his thin shoulders. Then he merely said, with a little sigh of fatigue:

"I will give you the money. We will economize, and always adapt means to ends. You well know that we really need but a few things, such as milk, eggs, and fruit. Provided that I can pay the costs of my experiments, the rest will go well enough."

Luc grasped his hands and shook them with deep emotion.

"My friend, my good friend. . . . But are we going to ruin your sister also?"

"That is true," said Jordan, "we are forgetting Sœurette."

They both turned. Sœurette was silently weeping. She

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had not left her chair, but remained seated before the little table, leaning her arms upon it and resting her chin on her hands. Big tears were rolling slowly down her cheeks in the forlorn desolation of a tortured and bleeding heart. What she had just heard had upset her and stirred her to the very depths of her being. All that her brother was saying for Luc re-echoed in her with an equal energy. This necessity for work, this abnegation before labor, was it not the life that must be accepted and lived loyally in order to achieve harmonious results? Henceforward would she not, like Luc, think herself wicked and cowardly if she impeded the progress of this work, if she failed to yield it her utmost devotion, even to the point of absolute renunciation. The strong courage of a pure soul, simple and sublime, which was hers by nature, had returned to her.

She rose, and gave her brother a lingering embrace; and, while her head rested on his shoulder, she murmured gently in his ear:

"I thank you. You have cured me. I will make the sacrifice."

Luc began to move to and fro in a growing need of action. He returned to the window and stood looking out upon the wide expanse of blue sky above the roofs of La Crêcherie. And as he turned back he once more repeated the cry:

"Ah, they do not love me. If the time ever comes when they do love me, everything will increase and prosper, everything will grow and expand like a plant in the sunshine."

Then Sœurette, who had approached him affectionately, said, with a final tremor of her vanquished passion:

"One must give love without seeking to be loved in return, for only love spontaneously given to others can warm this work with life."

These words, coming from one who was giving up everything for the sole pleasure of giving, fell in the midst of a profound silence. The three spoke no more, but all, re-

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united in a close bond of fraternal feeling, contemplated in the distance the budding city of justice and happiness, lying below them in the green plain, and which was going by degrees to extend its roofs, now that an abundance of love had been sown.

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IV

FROM that time Luc, deeply interested in the founding and building of his city, recovered his power of will and action; men and stones seemed to obey his word. He might be seen, like an apostle, cheerfully carrying on his mission with all his might. He was very happy, and maintained the struggle between La Crêcherie and the Pit with a sort of triumphant cheerfulness, which had its effect in conquering by degrees both men and things, thanks to the divine spirit of love and the desire for happiness that he suffused about him. When his town should be founded he would possess Josine. With Josine saved, all unhappy human beings on the earth could be saved, too. Such was his faith. He worked by love and for love, and he was certain of success.

One day under a blue sky he came upon a scene which, while it amused him, filled his heart with hope and tenderness. As he was walking round the outbuildings of the works, trying to keep an eye on everything, he was surprised to hear young voices and merry peals of laughter proceeding from one corner of the domain at the foot of the ascent of the Monts Bleuses, where the lands belonging to La Crêcherie bordered on those of the Pit. He drew near quietly, for he wanted to see without being seen, and came upon the delightful spectacle of a party of children playing in full freedom in the sunshine, in all the fraternal innocence of primitive times.

On La Crêcherie side of the wall was Nanet, who came every day to the new works to see his old comrades, and with him were Lucien and Antoinette Bonnaire, whom he must have enticed into joining him in some mighty hunt after lizards. All three, with their noses in the air, were

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laughing and shouting, while on the other side of the wall other children, whom Luc could not see, also were laughing and shouting. And it was not difficult to guess that Nise Delaveau had had a party of her little friends to breakfast, and that they had all run into the garden, attracted by the voices of the other children, both parties anxious to get together and to play with one another. The obstacle to this was that the door had been walled up, their elders having grown tired of scolding them without effect, so much were they bent on being good neighbors to one another. Delaveau's daughter had been punished, and expressly forbidden to go to that end of the garden. At La Crêcherie their teachers had attempted to make them understand that they might bring what they would be sorry for on the new enterprise—a complaint, or, possibly, a lawsuit. But the little rogues persisted; impelled by some unknown force towards what might happen to them in the future, they *would* play with one another and fraternize with total disregard of the hatreds of classes.

Their pure, clear, shrill voices rose louder and louder, like the notes of a lark.

"Is that you, Nise? Good-morning, Nise!"

"Good-morning, Nanet! Are you alone, Nanet?"

"Oh no! Here are Lucien and Antoinette! And you, Nise, over there—are you alone?"

"No, indeed. I have Louise and Paul. . . . Good-day, good-day, Nanet!"

"Good-day, good-day, Nise!"

And as every good-day was repeated, there came fresh bursts of laughter. It seemed so funny to them to talk when they could not see each other. Their words were dropping out of the skies.

"Say, Nise, are you there still?"

"Why, yes, Nanet; I am here, of course."

"Nise, Nise, hark! Are you not coming over to us?"

"Oh, Nanet, Nanet—how can I get over? They have walled up the door."

"Jump over—jump, Nise, my little Nise."

"Nanet, my little Nanet—do you jump!"

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And on a sudden, as if all had gone mad, six voices repeated: "Jump over! jump!" The children danced wildly on both sides of the wall, as if by skipping higher and higher they might catch sight of one another and seem to be together. They turned, they waltzed, they bowed and courtesied before this cruel wall; they made signs to one another with that childish power of imagination which takes no heed of obstacles.

Then the clear sound of their flute-like voices began again.

"Listen; can't you jump, Nise?"

"No, Nanet; I don't know how."

"Well, I will get up on the wall, Nise, and I will pull you by your shoulders, and get you up here."

"Oh! That's right—that's it, Nanet! Climb up, my little Nanet."

In a moment Nanet was on top of the wall, by dint of using his hands and feet with the agility of a cat. And once up there, astride on the top, he was a funny object, with his round head, his great blue eyes, and his light tousled hair. He was now fourteen, and small for his age, but he was stoutly built, and had a smiling, resolute air.

"Lucien! Antoinette!—keep a watch, you two!" And leaning over into the Delaveaus' garden, proud of being master of the situation, and seeing on both sides of the wall at once, he cried:

"Come up here, Nise! I'll hold you!"

"Ah, no! I don't want to be the first one up, Nanet. I'll stay here and watch."

"Then who will come first, Nise?"

"Look out, Nanet. Take care. Paul is coming. There is some trellis on this side of the wall. He is going to try if it will hold."

There was a pause among the voices. Nothing was heard but the cracking of rotten wood and sometimes a stifled burst of laughter. And Luc began to ask himself if he ought not to step forward and restore order, when his appearance would make each little band fly off like so

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many sparrows when they are suddenly surprised in a barn picking up grain. How often had he not scolded the children for fear that this comradeship they *would* persist in might cause him some unpleasant difficulty? But these children were so charming. The bravery and agility they had displayed in order to get together touched his heart. And yet a moment before he would have punished them.

He heard a cry of triumph. Paul's head appeared above the edge of the wall. He saw Nanet helping him, and lowering him on La Crêcherie side into Lucien's and Antoinette's arms. Paul, though he was more than fourteen, was not heavy; he had remained slim and delicate. He was a pretty, fair lad, kindly and gentle, with bright eyes full of intelligence. As soon as he fell into the arms of Antoinette he kissed her, for he knew her well. He liked to be with her, for she was tall, handsome, and graceful, though she was only twelve.

"That's all right, Nise. One is over now. Who comes next?"

"Hush, hush, Nanet! Something is moving down by the chicken-house. Lie flat on the wall; quick! quick!"

Then, when the danger was passed:

"Nanet, attention! It is Louise's turn. I am going to push up Louise!"

And soon after the head of Louise appeared, like that of a little goat, with a pinched nose and black eyes, rather obliquely set. She was a child of much vivacity, who was often amusing from her spirit of gayety. At eleven she was already a little, independent woman, with a will of her own. She completely upset her parents, good Monsieur and Madame Mazelle, who were amazed that such a wildling, so full of life, could have budded forth from their placid egoism. She did not wait till Nanet helped her down, but jumped and fell into the arms of Lucien, a playmate of whom she was very fond, and the oldest of them all, who, at fifteen, was as sturdy as a man, and who, very ingenious and inventive, had manufactured some extraordinary playthings.

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"That makes two, Nise! Now there is only yourself! Come up, quick. There is something moving again, near the wall."

There was a cracking of wood, and a whole section of the trellis fell.

"Oh! There, there, Nanet, but I can't! Louise has stamped with her feet and thrown everything to the ground."

"Wait! that's of no consequence. Give me your hands, Nise, and I'll pull you up."

"No, no; I can't. You see yourself, Nanet, that I must grow bigger. I am too small."

"But I tell you, Nise, I'll pull you up. There, now, again; once more! I'll bend over and you must stand tiptoe. Houp la! Do you see how I am pulling you?"

He had lain down on his stomach on top of the wall. He kept his balance by a wonderful power of will, and with a vigorous exertion of his strength he pulled Nise up. He made her sit astride of the wall before him. She was more tumbled and untidy than usual, with her fair hair curling like a little sheep's, her rosy mouth always ready to smile, and her pretty blue eyes the color of the sky. They made a droll pair, she and her friend Nanet. Both heads were of pure gold, both had disorderly hair blown about by the four winds of heaven.

In a minute they sat face to face astraddle on the wall, triumphantly delighted to be thus up in the air.

"Ah! how strong Nanet is! He pulled me up, as he said he would."

"Because you have grown so tall, Nise. I am fourteen now, you know."

"And, Nanet, I am eleven. . . . Ah! say! are we not just as if we were on horseback, riding a very tall horse carved out of stone?"

"Nise, listen. Do you want me to stand up?"

"Oh yes; stand up. I will stand by you."

But at this moment there was a stir in the garden; this time it came from the direction of the kitchen, and, seized with apprehension, Nanet and Nise threw their arms

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round each other; they interlaced each other; they clung together with all their strength, and slid down from the top of the wall. They might have killed themselves, but they merely laughed like mad, and when they were safe on the ground they began to play and to laugh louder than ever, for they were not in the least hurt, and had rather enjoyed their tumble. Lucien and Louise, Paul and Antoinette were already having a good time running about among the bushes and the round-topped rocks which at the foot of the Monts Bleuses gave them so many delightful hiding-places.

And Luc, finding he had come too late to interfere, walked softly away without revealing his presence. Since no one had seen him, nobody need ever know that he had shut his eyes. Ah! those dear children! How readily they yielded to the instincts of their youth; how, in spite of prohibitions, they sought each other out under the open heaven! They were the first fruits of a scheme of social life which in a few years would yield a harvest. Perhaps with them would lay the future solution of the reconciliation of classes, of righteousness, prosperity, and peace. What their parents could never do these children might accomplish, and their children might do even more, thanks to the continual progress of evolution going on in the world. And Luc, when he had hidden himself to watch them without frightening them, laughed gayly to himself in response to their laughter, unconscious of the difficulty they would presently have of getting back again over the wall. Never had any vision of the future so pleasing presented itself to him; never had he felt such courage for his fight, or such confidence in his victory.

After that came a bitter struggle for long months between the Pit and La Crêcherie. Luc, who for one moment had apprehended failure, exerted all his strength to keep his scheme from gliding to ruin. He knew that for a long time to come he had better not think of acquiring more land. He only aimed to lose none; and began to feel the advantage of remaining stationary, though assailed by blows from all quarters. But what a tremendous

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business his works were doing—how cheerfully and bravely his people were laboring! He seemed like an apostle watching over the growth of his own idea. He was everywhere at once. He animated the workmen in the great halls of the works, and tightened the bonds of brotherhood between the small and the great in the Communal House; he watched over the administration of affairs in the co-operative stores. He was forever seen on the sunny avenues of his rising city, talking to the women and children, and delighting in taking his share in the play and laughter of all these young people who were his own. Everything started into life, grew, and organized itself as he directed, thanks to his genius and his creative ability. He was the man from whose hands dropped seeds wherever he passed. His greatest miracle was the conquest he made of his workmen, among whom the rising spirit of disorder and rebellion had lasted but a short time. Although Bonnaire did not always think as he did, Luc had captured the affection of this man, who was so brave and so kind-hearted, and found in him the most faithful and devoted of lieutenants, without whom assuredly the work could not have been accomplished. And his power of love had acted in the same way upon his other workmen, all of whom by degrees had rallied round him. They were attached to him personally, they felt him to be so tender and so brotherly. They saw that he lived only for the good of others, and that in their happiness he felt sure of finding his own. The employés of La Crêcherie became like a great family, whose ties were constantly drawn closer. Every one began to understand at last that to work for himself was to work for others. Not one workman left the establishment in six months, though some who had left it had not come back. Those who remained had pledged themselves not to take all that was due to them out of the profits, in order that the house might form a sinking-fund ready for any emergency.

At this critical time it was certainly the firm union of all the members of the association working together for the common good which saved La Crêcherie and prevent-

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ed it from failing, assailed as it was by the selfish execration and jealousy of old Beauclair. The sinking-fund, so prudently put by, grew larger and larger, and was of great service. It enabled the concern to face bad times with confidence, and it prevented it from being obliged at critical moments to have recourse to the disastrous system of borrowing. Thanks to this fund, they were twice enabled to buy new machinery, made necessary by changes in the way of working metals, and this greatly lowered the price at which their wares could be put on the market. There were also about this time some lucky chances for the firm. Several great works were undertaken. Bridges, iron buildings, and railroads, which took quantities of rails, trusses, and other structural iron, were constructed. The long peace in Europe had wonderfully developed the uses and need of iron, as employed in works of peace and civilization. Never before had beneficent iron entered into men's homes to such a point. The output of manufactured iron at La Crêcherie had therefore increased, though the profits were not yet very great, for it was the wish of Luc to produce cheaply, thinking that this policy would give him great future advantages. He strengthened the concern by very prudent business methods, and was constantly economizing, laying up money in his sinking-fund, ready for any emergency; and the devotion of his men to the common cause, their readiness to make sacrifices by giving up part of what was due to them, enabled him to wait for a time of prosperity, without suffering greatly in the mean time.

At the Pit affairs were still more flourishing; there the business receipts had not diminished, and the Pit's costly manufacture of shells and guns seemed to every one a great success. But this was only in appearance, and Delaveau began occasionally to feel serious anxieties which he would not own to every one. All Beauclair was on his side, all its capitalists and *bourgeois* society, which thought its interests endangered by La Crêcherie. Besides this, he had the firm conviction that he was in the right; he had no doubt that he had truth, authority, and force on his

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side, and that his final victory was sure. But all the same he had some secret doubts; trouble seemed to grow for him out of the prosperity of La Crêcherie, though he prophesied its downfall every three months. He could not strive against all those iron and steel productions in which it did business, those girders and that structural iron which its workshops turned out so cheaply and which were so good. He had to rely only on fine steel and carefully manufactured products that cost three and four francs a kilogramme, which were furnished also by two large concerns in a neighboring department. These two houses offered great competition. He felt that out of the three there was one too many; and the question was, which two should absorb the third. Weakened by the establishment of La Crêcherie, would not the Pit be the one that must go down? This thought continually worried him, though he redoubled his activity, and serenely asserted his confidence in his good cause—the old system of paid workmen who earned no more than their wages. But more than any dread of competition, what haunted him was the consciousness that he had no funds in reserve with which to face necessary expenses or avert an unexpected catastrophe. If there should come a stoppage of work, a strike, or even a bad year, it would be ruin to the Pit, because the concern would have nothing to go on with while waiting for a return of business. Already, in an emergency, when they had to have some new machinery, he had been forced to borrow three hundred thousand francs, the interest on which was a heavy item in the yearly balance-sheet. And how would it be if he had to keep on borrowing and borrowing, until he made his final leap into the gulf of insolvency?

His foolish disinclination to disturb himself prevented him from suspecting that his wife, Fernande, was backing up his foppish cousin; it never entered his head that to her was due the corruption and extravagance of Guerdache, that Boisgelin's money was spent to satisfy her follies and caprices. At Guerdache there were continual *fêtes*. Fernande was delighted with her triumph; it seemed to give her a revenge over her early destiny; her social success in-

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toxicated her, and to have this come suddenly to an end would seem a dreadful downfall. She spurred on and excited Boisgelin. She assured him that her husband was growing inactive, and did not make the works pay what they ought, and she advised him to spur the manager up by continual demands for money. The attitude of Delaveau, a self-reliant man who never confided business matters to a woman, not even to his wife, though he adored her, had ended by convincing her that she was right, and that if hereafter she hoped to realize her dream, which was to return to Paris with millions of money to spend, she must worry her husband incessantly, and fling money away on everything as a means of getting it back in the future in some form a hundredfold.

One night, however, Delaveau forgot himself. He and his wife were coming home from a hunting-party given at Guerdache, during which Fernande, excited by a swift gallop on horseback, had disappeared with Boisgelin. That evening there had been a great dinner-party, and it was past midnight when the pair drove home. The young wife, who seemed overcome with fatigue, and satiated with the pleasure which made up her daily life, undressed at once and went to bed, while her husband took off his clothes methodically, walking about the room as he did so, apparently preoccupied and out of temper.

"Tell me," said he at length, "did Boisgelin tell you anything to-day when you rode off together?"

Fernande, much surprised, opened her eyes, which were fast closing in sleep.

"No," she answered; "at least he said nothing of any consequence. What do you suppose he said to me?"

"Well," said Delaveau, "we had just had a dispute. He asked me for ten thousand francs, which he wanted by the end of this month. And this time I refused him decidedly; it is impossible. It is madness."

She raised her head, and her eyes kindled.

"What do you mean by madness? . . . Why don't you give him the ten thousand francs?"

In fact she had put Boisgelin up to asking for ten thou-

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sand francs from her husband to buy an electric automobile, in which she had a great desire to fly about the country with maddening swiftness.

"But," cried Delaveau, forgetting his usual reticence, "it is just this. Because that fool will finish by ruining the concern with his continual demands for money. We shall fail before long if he does not make up his mind to slacken his pace. The *fêtes* he is forever giving at Guerdache are such nonsense; it is just like his stupid vanity to let everybody eat him out of house and home."

She suddenly sat up in bed, somewhat pale, while he continued:

"There is but one sensible person at Guerdache, and that is poor Suzanne. She is the only one who never seems to share in its amusements. It is pitiful to see her so sad, and when I begged her to-day to speak to her husband, she answered, trying, as she spoke, to keep back her tears, that she was not willing to interfere with him in any way."

This misplaced appeal to the lawful wife, to the woman who had been made a sacrifice, yet who was so dignified in her renouncement of all influence with her husband, put the last touch to Fernande's exasperation. And the idea that the works that were to furnish money for her pleasures might be in danger put her beside herself.

"We might fail, you say? How's that? . . . I thought the business was going on well."

She put so much passionate emphasis into her question that Delaveau became alarmed lest that she should magnify causes for apprehension that he was hardly willing to acknowledge to himself, so he held back the whole truth, which in his angry mood he had been about to tell her.

"Business is going on all right, no doubt; but it would go on still better if Boisgelin was not always taking everything we make to keep up the idiotic life he is carrying on. I tell you he is a fool, with his poor brains of a fop."

Fernande reassured, lay down again. She thought her husband a rough, common man, brutal and miserly, who was trying to keep as tight a hold as he could on the vast

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sums of money accumulated by the business. The way in which he spoke of Boisgelin seemed to her an insult to herself.

"My dear," she said, dryly, "every man is not made to stultify himself by working day in and day out the whole time, and if he has money he has a right to do what he likes with it, and to enjoy the pleasures of a superior existence."

Delaveau had an angry answer on his tongue, but he restrained himself, and made a violent effort to grow calm. Why should he try to convince his wife? He treated her like a spoiled child; he let her do whatever she liked, and never grew angry when he saw in her any errors of conduct, though he was very severe on such things in other people. He even took no notice of her foolish, reckless life, for she was to him his own pet folly, a plaything in his big coarse hands — the hands of a hard-working laborer. After a long day passed in the thick smoke and the darkness and deafening noises of the Pit, he came back to her with ever fresh delight. He gave her his admiration, his adoration. She was an idol set apart, the object of a certain superstition, to whom he sacrificed his dignity and good sense, and, above all, she was above suspicion.

There was silence in the room. Delaveau went to bed, but the little electric night-lamp was still burning. The wife at his side looked so beautiful he could not bear to be displeased with her. He imprinted a kiss upon her cheek, near her ear. She did not move. He thought she must be angry with him, and anxious to do something that would please her, and would show that he, too, could understand the foolish fancies of a luxurious life, he said:

"Well, then! I'll give him those ten thousand francs if he has such a fancy for an automobile as he says he has. What I said was for the sake of prudence. . . . It was a splendid hunt we had to-day!"

But still she did not answer. He tried another kiss, but at last, thinking she was really asleep, he said, softly:

"Good-night, Fernande!"

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He put out the night-lamp and tried to go to sleep; but he could not close his eyes; they stayed wide open in the darkness. He was feverish and could not rest. His fears came crowding on him, and he reviewed all the anxieties caused him by the danger that threatened the concern of which he was in charge. As he lay awake the difficulties he foresaw seemed to increase. Never before had he seen so clearly into the future; never had things seemed to him so dark as they did now. The cause of the approaching ruin he saw clearly was the mad desire of Boisgelin to spend money almost before it had been earned. Somewhere there seemed to yawn a gulf which swallowed up the earnings of the Pit, and absorbed all the fruits of others' industry. Delaveau made a careful self-examination. He was always severe on himself, but he could not see that in this case he had anything to reproach himself with. He rose early in the morning and left the works late in the evening. He was always overseeing, and managed his clerks and his workmen as he would have handled a regiment. He put into all the details of his management the continuous strain of his remarkable faculties, great rectitude, though with a certain bluntness, rare powers for enforcing method and order, and the brave resolution of a wrestler who has promised himself victory, and will either conquer or perish. He suffered terribly as he felt himself, in spite of his heroism, slipping down into disaster, together with the slow destruction of all that he had created, because of the daily demands made on him for money which he could not supply, and which, with all his energy, he knew not how to arrest. No doubt the continual extravagance of what he called the idiotic life led by Boisgelin, his gluttonous desire for pleasure, was what was slowly destroying everything. But who was it who incited Boisgelin to be such a fool; what made this poor man mad? This he was unable to comprehend, for he himself was an earnest worker, sober and self-restrained, hating idleness, and believing that what some men called pleasure was destruction to their creative faculties.

Poor Delaveau never suspected that she who was de-

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stroying his hopes and poisoning his life was living day by day beside him, was his adored Fernande, his beautiful wife, who was lying asleep so near him; and that while in thick smoke and in the noise and heat of the workshops and the furnaces in the Pit he was doing his best to wring money out of the toil of the workmen, she was loitering in fresh toilettes under the shady trees of Guerdache, scattering money to the four winds to gratify her fancies, and with her little white teeth was cracking and swallowing, as she might have done sugar-plums, hundreds of thousands of francs, which a thousand workmen were making for her amid the reverberations of the great steam-hammers; and that on that very night, while, with his eyes wide open in the darkness, he was torturing himself by thinking how he could obtain and pay the sums he owed, the cause of his trouble was sleeping at his side. He could feel her as she lay dreaming over the pleasures of the past day, which had exhausted her. Then his thoughts reverted to his industrial battle. Fernande, he thought, was a mere irresponsible child, whose whims he ought to humor. She was his idol, the object of his worship. So at last he fell asleep and dreamed that under the Pit there were inimical and diabolical forces eating into the very soil, so that all the works would in the end cave in and be engulfed some night when there should come a frightful storm and hurricane.

During the following day Fernande thought much of the fears that her husband had expressed to her. Making all allowance for what she believed to be his love of hoarding money and his hatred of luxurious enjoyments, she shivered with apprehension when she thought that there was any possibility of coming disaster. If Boisgelin were ruined, what would become of her? It would not only put an end to her present delicious life—a life such as she had always wished for, in contrast to the poverty she had suffered in her early days, when she wore shoes down at heel and worked for hard masters—but it meant a return to Paris, conquered by fate, living in a cheap apartment in some obscure part of the city, on the pay of some

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small employment for Delaveau, which might enable him to exist, while she would fall back into the economy, the meanness of a working-man's housekeeping. No—no! she would never consent! She would not let her golden prey be snatched from her, but would hold on to her triumph with all her might, with all the hungry strength of her exacting nature. In her, under all her delicate beauty, there was the ferocity of a she-wolf, with its fierce instincts for blood. She was resolved to give up nothing, to enjoy her pleasures to the very end. No one should take them from her or compromise her in any way. Those filthy black works, which held the mighty hammers she heard going day and night to forge pleasure for her, she despised as places in which were concealed disgraceful things connected with her life. As for the workmen who were burning their skins in the flames of this *inferno* that she might lead a life of fresh and happy indolence, she looked upon them somewhat as domestic animals that were feeding her, or saving her from fatigue. Never had she set her dainty feet on the rough floor of the halls; never had she taken the smallest interest in the human herd that daily passed her door, ground down by accursed labor. But this herd belonged to her; those works were hers, and the idea that her source of fortune could be dried up by the ruin of the works revolted her and put her in an attitude of war, as if an attack had been made upon her own person. And that was why she considered any one who did injury to the Pit as her personal enemy, a dangerous evil-doer whom she would try by every means imaginable to get rid of. Thus her hatred of Luc had gone on increasing ever since the first time they met at that breakfast at Guerdache, when, with her woman's instinct, she had discerned in him the man who would stand in her way. She had always been opposed to him; and now he was threatening to destroy the Pit and to fling her back into her old disgusting condition of mediocrity. If she let him go on she foresaw the end of her own happiness, for he would rob her of all she loved in life. And as graceful and as delicate as she appeared, she burned with the fury of a murderess, thought

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only of how she might get rid of him, and planned catastrophes by which she might crush him.

It was now eight months since Josine, in a last night of tender love, had come to Luc's house to say farewell to him after his terrible walk along the Rue de Brias. The result of their interviews was Josine's pregnancy. She had been five months with child, and Ragu did not discover it until one night, when he was drunk and tried to beat her, then she defended herself in such a way that he began to comprehend her condition and what she apprehended.

He accused her in the vilest language. He had his own reasons for believing that her child could not be his. Had he not said he would never suffer a string to be tied round his paw? Then whose could the babe be?

But Josine, as pale as death, with her soft and honest eyes fixed on his drunken face, would not answer him. She was astonished, indeed, to see him so excited, since every day for some time past he had threatened to turn her out into the streets, saying he should be glad to get rid of her, and any man might pick her up who wanted her. He himself had been running after other women, as he had done formerly, seducing any working-girl willing to listen to him, or women roving in the dirty alleys of Beauclair.

In vain in his rage he struck her, and screamed:

"It's not mine! You won't dare say that it's mine!"

Finally, without removing her eyes from his, she answered:

"No! it is not yours! I'll not tell you the father's name. You have no right to know it, for you have told me twenty times that you had had me long enough, and that I had better look out for somebody else."

He seemed as if he would kill her. He kicked her and struck her. She saved herself with great difficulty; but he was drunk, and often missed his aim.

He became a prey to frightful jealousy. The wife whom he had been threatening to turn out into the streets was now watched and kept as far as possible in seclusion. He went into paroxyms of rage if he saw her speaking to

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any other man. He ill-treated her; he tried to murder her, and ever in his fury he repeated the same words: "Tell me his name! Tell me his name! And then, I swear, I'll do nothing more to you."

But she would not give way. She bore his blows and insults, only saying, gently and truthfully:

"There is no need for you to know his name. It is no concern of yours."

Ragu had never suspected Luc. Such an idea had not occurred to him. No one but Sœurette had ever seen Josine leaving Luc's house after one of their interviews. He tried to find out who it could be among his comrades. But in vain he watched, questioned, and inquired. His ill success made him more and more angry.

Josine kept herself meantime in strict seclusion. She feared the consequences for Luc should their secret be discovered.

But chance revealed it to him. One day he came upon a group of women to whom La Toupe was relating that her brother's wife was pregnant, and she accompanied this information with a flood of venomous, abominable assertions. Luc stood and listened, his heart beating against his ribs. He never caught sight of Josine now, except occasionally, when in search of Nanet she came up to La Crêcherie. She happened to come on that day. Some one told her that Monsieur Luc had overheard the accusations of her sister-in-law. She saw him troubled and excited, and longed to be able to tell him the truth. By a slight gesture she let him know the secret of his paternity. But that day they could not exchange a single word. Luc, greatly moved, went home happy and satisfied. Before long he heard of Ragu's jealousy, of his violence, and of the strict watch he kept over his wife. But Josine was now his in virtue of the tie which would bind them to each other, and the day must come, he thought, when he could claim her.

Meantime he suffered terribly from knowing that Josine was insulted, ill-treated, and in constant peril. It was unbearable to think of leaving her in the brutal

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hands of such a monster as Ragu, when he would have liked to transplant her into a paradise of tender love, and honor her as his wife and the mother of his children.

But what could he do when she would not see or speak to him, because she feared to endanger his life, should suspicion fall on him?

One dark evening he hid himself in the shadow of a wall in a corner of the wretched street of old Beauclair called the Rue des Trois Lunes, and was finally able to stop Josine as she passed by.

"Oh, Luc!" she cried; "is that you? How rash, my friend! I beg of you to give me one kiss, and then leave quickly."

But he seized her by the waist, and whispered, eagerly:

"No—no, Josine. I want to tell you something. You are suffering too much, and it is wicked of me to leave you to such misery, you who are so dear and so precious to me. Hear me, Josine. I have come to take you home with me, and you must go. In my house you shall be considered as my wife, loved, honored, and happy."

For a moment she let him clasp her, and then freed herself.

"Oh, Luc! what are you saying? Have you so little sense? Would you have me go with you? Great Heaven! when it would bring on you the greatest perils? It is I who would be criminal in that case. I would never consent to put any difficulty in the way of the work you are trying to accomplish. Leave quickly. They may kill me, but I will never tell your name!"

In vain he tried to convince her of the uselessness of such a sacrifice.

"Will you never come back to me? Will your child never be my child, openly acknowledged?"

Softly she answered: "I will come to you on the day when you have need of me; when I shall not impede your work, or draw you into danger. Then our child will give us new strength."

And as they parted she comforted him by saying: "Ah,

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Luc! don't pity me too much; I am very strong, and I am very happy."

"You are my wife. I loved you from the day that I first saw you, so poor, so lovely. And if you will not tell my name, I will never tell yours. I will keep it as an object of secret worship until the day when we may proclaim our love."

"Oh, Luc! how good you are, how wise you are, and how happy we shall be when that time comes!"

"It is you, Josine, who are wise and good. And it is as the result of my having helped you that evening that we shall be happy together some day, and make others happy, too!"

Then they parted. She went back proudly to her daily martyrdom, while he walked away into the darkness, to resume his fight and win his victory.

But a few weeks later an accident put Josine's secret into Fernande's hands. Fernande knew Ragu, whose return to the Pit had made some stir, and, after he came back, Delaveau affected to think much of him, and to push him forward, and had promised him that he should be a master-puddler, and sometimes gave him extra money, though his conduct was abominable. Fernande knew what was going on in Ragu's household, for he had no idea of concealment, but poured out filthy accusations against his wife to every one. And all the workmen in the shops were asking one another who was the fellow who would be the father of the expected child? The question was even discussed in the office of the manager, and Delaveau had said before Fernande that such talk was a great annoyance to him, and that Ragu was so incensed about the thing, and so mad with jealousy, that he would work like a maniac when he did work, but sometimes would not work at all for several days, now rushing furiously at his work and rabbling the metal in fusion like a madman who feels an impulse to strike and kill, while at other times he refused to touch a tool.

One winter morning at an early breakfast, when Delaveau had gone for three days to Paris, Fernande began

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questioning her maid, who had brought her some tea and toast. Nise was present, sitting quietly, like a good little girl, drinking her cup of milk, but casting eyes of longing at her mother's tea, tea being a luxury forbidden her.

"Is it true, Félicie, that there is more trouble between Ragu and his wife? My washerwoman tells me that Ragu has half killed her this time."

"I don't know, madame, but that report may be exaggerated, for I saw Josine pass the house just now, and she did not look more cast down than she does usually."

A silence ensued, and then the maid, as she left the room, added:

"That is not to say that he will not kill her sure, some day, for he tells everybody that's what he means to do."

Again there was silence. Fernande went on eating slowly, without saying a word, in a dark reverie, when Nise, in the midst of the oppressive quiet of a winter morning, began thinking aloud and humming to herself: "Josine's real husband is not Ragu; 'tis the head of La Crêcherie—Monsieur Luc, Monsieur Luc, Monsieur Luc, Monsieur Luc!"

Her mother raised her eyes in amazement, and looked at her fixedly, and said:

"Who told you so? Why do you say that?"

But disconcerted at having sung these words without intending it, Nise stuck her nose into her cup of milk, and tried to look innocent.

"Oh! I did not mean anything. I don't know why."

"Do you mean to tell me, you little story-teller, that you don't know who told you? What you were singing could not have come out of your own head; somebody must have told you."

Nise, more and more troubled, seeing herself falling into a bad scrape, which might bring her into difficulties, persisted in saying, in the quietest way possible, in spite of evidence:

"I assure you, mamma, that one often sings of things without knowing why, just because they come into one's head."

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As Fernande looked at her steadily, surprised to see her so expert in falsehood, a sudden idea struck her.

"Nanet told you what you were singing; it must have been Nanet."

Nise cast her eyes down; it was Nanet. But she was afraid of being scolded and even punished as she had been on the day when her mother had caught her with Paul Boisgelin and Louise Mazelle coming back from La Crêcherie through the wall. She tried to tell another falsehood.

"Oh! not Nanet! You know I never see Nanet any more since you forbade me."

The mother, in a fever of anxiety to know, became suddenly kind and gentle. She was so much under the influence of her own emotions that she forgot to be severe. What pranks Nise might have played with Nanet lost all importance in comparison with the main fact that she desired to be certain of.

"Listen to me, my little girl. It is very naughty not to tell the truth. That day when I deprived you of dessert it was because you insisted that you had got over the wall to look for a ball. Now, if you tell me the truth, I promise not to punish you. Come, tell me, was it Nanet?"

Nise, who was naturally a truthful child, answered at once:

"Yes, mamma, it was Nanet."

"And he told you that Josine's real husband was Monsieur Luc?"

"Yes, mamma."

"And how did he know? Why did he tell you that Monsieur Luc was the real husband of Josine?"

Here innocent little Nise became confused, and again she began to drink her milk instead of answering.

"Oh! I don't know; for many things. He knows it, though, for certain, he says."

Notwithstanding her great wish to learn everything, Fernande felt ashamed to put such questions to her little daughter, and so she said no more. She tried to cover up her cruel, vulgar curiosity.

"Nanet don't know anything at all. He is talking non-

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sense, and you were a little fool to repeat what he said. You will be so good as never again to sing anything of the kind, if you want to have any dessert."

So the breakfast at last finished in a silence which corresponded to the sharp, cold weather outside. No more words were exchanged between the mother and the child, the former being absorbed by the secret that had just come into her possession, and the latter being much pleased to have been let off so easily.

Fernande passed the day in her own room, thinking things over, and debating how she could make use of them. In the first place, she asked herself if what Nanet had said could be really true. But what reason could she have to doubt it? He certainly must know; he must have seen; he must have heard. He was too fond of his sister to tell lies about her, and, besides, there were a number of other little things that made the story probable. Then Fernande began to debate within herself how she might make use of such a weapon, which chance seemed to have put into her hand. She sought how she might poison it, and with it kill her enemy. She had never hated Luc more. Delaveau had gone that day to Paris to try to raise a new loan. The Pit was growing more unstable day by day, but victory would be certain if she could succeed in getting rid of the hateful master of La Crêcherie, the man whose plans were threatening to rob her life of luxury and pleasure. If the enemy were dead, competition would be at an end, and victory possible. With a man like Ragu, mad with jealousy, drunken and furious, events might be speedily hurried to the desired end. It would be enough to incite him to pull his knife out of his pocket. But, then, this was as yet only a dream; how could she make it real? How should she act? Should she tell Ragu? Should she give him the name of the man he had been looking for? That was, of course, the proper plan; but her difficulty began when she asked herself by what means she could tell Ragu; where and how? She decided at last to send him an anonymous letter. She would cut the words she wanted out of a newspaper; she would gum

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them together, and at night she would throw the letter into the post-box. She began to cut out the words. But suddenly this plan appeared very uncertain. It might not accomplish its purpose, for a letter is but a cold resource, and its purport might be overlooked. If Ragu was not at once stung to fury, to madness, he might possibly not act. The truth would have to be forced into him; he must receive the blow in his face, and under such circumstances he assuredly would act like a madman. But whom could she send to interview him? Where could she find an intermediary?—some one who could be trusted to rub the poison into him? She searched in vain, and grew discouraged. She could think of no one. She thought and thought until night came. She grew feverish, and her head throbbed as she tried to plan her tragedy, but did not see how she might bring it to the desired end.

When she went to bed, at about ten o'clock, she had at last come to a decision. She would send for Ragu, on pretence of asking him if he would let his wife come to her house and do some sewing for her for a few days, and when he came, and she had him there alone with her, perhaps she would be able to tell him what she wished him to know. But still she was not satisfied. This plan filled her with anxiety as to the consequences of such a revelation, told quietly in a business-room on the ground floor—the office of her absent husband. She was glad Delaveau was away. She stretched herself out in the bed, restless with fever. In spite of this, however, she was so weary that at last she went to sleep, still in doubt as to what she would do, and until five o'clock in the morning she never stirred, but slept the sweet sleep of an infant. When five o'clock struck she suddenly woke up, and lying on her back, with her large eyes wide open in the darkened chamber, she took up the question where she had left it, and at once solved the problem, with extraordinary boldness and precision. It was very plain. She must go herself to the works, with the pretext for seeing Ragu that she had already prepared, and in the course of conversation she would let fall the words that would put him beside himself. She

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knew, for she had taken pains to know, that Ragu would be at work that night; so that in the morning, at about seven, she might go down and catch him just when the night workmen were going home and the day workmen were coming on duty. Feverish as she was, she could debate no longer. She felt absolutely certain that she had discovered the best way out of her difficulties. What she relied upon was a feminine instinct common to such women—women who seduce and devour men, and who are confident that things and people, and circumstances that they cannot see beforehand, will bring their purposes at last to the desired end.

How long seemed that time of waiting from five to seven o'clock, hoping for the day so slow in dawning! She could not go to sleep again, but tossed restlessly upon her bed. She was eager to have her interview with Ragu; she seemed spurred on by some feeling that she could hardly account for. She tossed and retossed on her bed, but never faltered in her resolution. She tried to imagine how it all would happen, to plan everything beforehand, but she felt certain of the success of her plan. All would go well, of that she felt sure. It seemed to her that destiny was putting the right events into her hands, that she was fated to set them all to work, and that she could not refuse to employ them. What she minded was being obliged to wait so long.

At last, at a quarter to seven, the hour that she had fixed on beforehand, she sprang out of bed. The cold in her room half froze her, but she became calm, and was once more mistress of herself. Although it was barely day, she lighted no fire, and did not even open the Venetian blinds. She merely bound up her hair, twisted it round her head, fastened it with hair-pins, and without putting on her corsets slipped on a loose white flannel wrapper, which covered her completely; then she put on a pair of white velvet slippers. After this she went downstairs, as she occasionally did early in the morning, when she had forgotten to give some order and had remembered it during the night.

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Down-stairs the maids were not astir. They were taking advantage of their master's absence, and calculating that madame would sleep late that morning. Fernande, with extraordinary precision in her movements, crossed her husband's office, and opened the door which led from it on to the wooden gallery which communicated with the main building of the Pit, in which the managers' offices were situated. The clerks would not arrive till eight o'clock, and the boy whose duty it was to sweep out the offices was chatting on the road outside with the watchman, who was quietly smoking his pipe. She was not even noticed. She cut straight across the court-yard, and went into the hall where the puddling-furnaces were located. Nobody had noticed her. As she had serenely calculated, circumstances were in her favor, for the night gang had just left and the day workmen had not arrived. Fortunately, too, as it seemed to her, Ragu, who had been delayed by a sort of rage for work, was there alone, still in his working clothes, but about to change his garments.

Fernande, though she knew something about the place, had never before ventured into this dark abode of coal and iron. She felt an intense disgust for the dirt and mean disorder in which she found herself. She stopped for a moment, a little embarrassed, in her white wrapper and her white slippers, before she felt courage to enter the immense dark hole which was the puddling-hall. Daylight had hardly found its way in there; only two furnaces were lighted, from which flames and smoke shot up like rays of sunshine. She did not know where to set her feet, the place was so full of muddy holes, the floor so black with coal-dust and so encumbered by ingots of iron. An acrid smell of coal-gas from the braziers and of exhalations from the sweating bodies of working-men made her feel sick. Yet she went in, and as she did so she at once saw Ragu in the midst of the great empty hall. He was walking towards the wooden shed in which the workmen hung up their clothes. All night the master-puddler had been rabbling iron, impelled by a furious desire to work and to forget himself in doing so, so that he

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whirled his rabble as if it were a weapon with which he would like to slaughter the whole world. He was sweating from his work. He had thrown off his apron, and was clad only in his shirt and felt jacket, and before he put on his out-door clothes he was finishing his fourth bottle of wine, which was more than he usually drank during the night. He was drinking out of the neck of the bottle. He was drunk with wine and heat and anger. Suddenly turning when he reached the door of the shed, he saw a woman all in white in the black darkness of the hall. He was so astonished at this apparition that he drew near to examine it. Fernande, when she recognized him holding the bottle on high and emptying down his throat what remained of the wine, stopped short, more embarrassed than before. She saw he was half naked, and she had intended to wait till he had put on his clothes before accosting him. But he was coming towards her, and she could not avoid him. She at once began with what she was there for.

"It is I, Ragu. I have something I wanted to ask of you, and I knew I should find you here."

He stood still, stupefied at the thought of her having come there to seek him. Then, for the first time, she realized the impossibility of explaining the strange step she had taken, and she rushed at her object at once.

"I wanted to ask you if you would let your wife come and work for me a few days. I want some one, and I thought of her."

Ragu at once forgot the strangeness of her appearance in that place. A rush of blind anger made his blood boil in his brains.

"My wife! Do you want my wife? Ah! thunder and lightning! Take her, then! Never send her back to me! Let her starve!"

Fernande had expected this violence, but she feigned surprise and pity and concern.

"Then things are not going well with you and her? I thought you had forgiven her, and that matters had been arranged before the little baby should be born."

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"Forgive her? Forgive her what?" cried Ragu, smarting under this new blow of the whip with which she was cutting into his raw wound. "Do you mean I am to forgive the child that strumpet is about to bear?"

"Of course your wife has been too easily misled; she is so young, so pretty. It is only natural at her age that she should listen to handsome gentlemen when they make love."

He closed his eyes. He saw partly what she meant, and he growled out:

"I'll settle the handsome gentlemen who make love to her! Madame, do you think I am going to bring up and support that bastard?—her child and his—not mine!"

Then Fernande made believe that she was very much astonished, and said, with an air of perfect innocence:

"But I thought they told me . . . I thought you had settled that question of the child. Ought not the child's father to provide for it?"

"Who's that?"

"The master of La Crêcherie, that Monsieur Luc—its father!"

"Its father?"

Ragu, stupefied, had come close up to her. His burning face was close to hers.

"Oh!" cried she; "then is it not true? Then you knew nothing? Ah! now I am so sorry I said anything. They told me that you had agreed with that Monsieur Luc; that you would keep your wife if he would take the child."

Ragu was trembling all over. His eyes had madness in them. His face was convulsed.

"What are you telling me—say? What did you come here to tell me? You want me to lay hands on the master of La Crêcherie, the Monsieur Luc who has seduced my wife. I see it all now. Never fear, I'll settle my account with him. I'll see to that. But tell me, say—why did you come here? What have you done this for?"

She was frightened. She felt he was becoming her master. She tried to get away.

"You are beside yourself, Ragu," said she. "We will

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say no more now. We will talk it over when you are more calm."

With one bound he stood between her and the door.

"No—no. Listen. I have something to say to you. You yourself said that handsome gentlemen make love to our wives—you know you said it, and therefore it is only right that we should pay them back in the same way, when their women fall into our power."

With that he pushed her violently towards the wooden shed, the filthy dressing-room where workmen changed their clothes. The room was dark. There was no one near to save her from his vile embraces.

Ten minutes later, as he left, he remembered that he had dropped something from his pocket. He found it at last after a search; it was his knife. As soon as he had grasped it he ran out, growling insults at his victim. His last words were:

"Now for the other one! I'll soon settle his affair!"

When Fernande was able to move she gathered up her hair, folded her soiled, torn dressing-wrapper round her, and had the extreme good fortune to get back to her own house without meeting any one. When she reached her own room she thought herself safe. But what was she to do with the clothes she had worn, so torn and dirty? Her white velvet slippers were covered with mud, her white flannel wrapper was spotted with oil and coal-dust. All was filthy and disgusting. She made a bundle of the things and hid them behind a piece of furniture with the purpose of burning them as soon as opportunity offered, like a murderer who tries to dispose of his bloody clothes.

Then she lay down in her bed, turned her face to the wall, and drew the coverings closely over her.

About ten o'clock Félicie, her maid, came at last into the chamber; she had been surprised that madame had not rung her bell, and was impatient for the summons, because she had a great piece of news to tell.

"Madame is not sick, I hope?"

As no answer came, she paused a minute, and then went

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towards the window to open the Venetian blinds, as she always did. But a murmur that came from the bed stopped her.

"Does madame wish to stay in bed?"

There was still no answer. Félicie was burning with the wish to tell her mistress her great news, and decided to impart it, so she said:

"Does madame not know?"

Cold silence seemed to fill the chamber. Out of the bed came only a strange, stifled sound beneath the bed-clothes.

"Well, madame, a workman from the Pit . . . that Ragu; you know him . . . has just killed Monsieur Luc, the master of La Crêcherie. He stabbed him with a knife."

Fernande, as if moved by a spring, started up, very white, with her hair falling about her.

She sat up in her tumbled bed, but all she said was, "Ah!"

"Yes, madame, Ragu has stabbed him in the back, right in between his shoulders. They say it was something about his wife. What a catastrophe!"

With eyes fixed as if looking at something far off, Fernande, in the half-light, sat motionless.

"All right," she said; "now let me sleep."

And when the maid had softly shut the door she fell back on her pillows. A dreadful thirst for blood, a triumphant joy in successful crime, took possession of her.

It was about nine o'clock in the pale, early light of a winter morning when Luc was stabbed. He was making his morning visit to his schools, usually the pleasantest moment of his day, when Ragu, who was lying in wait for him hidden behind some furze bushes, sprang out and struck him with a knife between his shoulders as he crossed the threshold, laughing with some little girls who had run to meet him. He gave a loud cry and fell, while the murderer made his escape, gained the slopes of the Monts Bleuses, and disappeared among the rocks and bushes. It

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happened that at that moment Sœurette was not at hand, being busy in the dairy in another part of the park. The little girls who were on the spot fled terrified, screaming for help, crying out that Ragu had killed Monsieur Luc. Several minutes elapsed before laborers from the works arrived and raised the stricken man, who had fainted from the violence of the blow. His blood had flowed freely, and the steps of the Communal House, where the schools were held, were red with it. Nobody thought of capturing Ragu, who was seen running away in the distance, and Luc, when the workmen were going to carry him to one of the near rooms in the Communal House, having recovered consciousness, implored them in a weak voice not to do so.

"No—no, friends. My own home."

They obeyed him, and carried him on a stretcher to the little detached house that he inhabited. But it was with great difficulty that they lifted him on to his bed, where he again lost consciousness from the violence of his pain.

At this moment Sœurette arrived. One of the girls had had the presence of mind to go and tell her at the dairy, while a workman hastened to Beauclair to summon Dr. Novarre. When Sœurette entered the room and saw Luc stretched out, pale and covered with blood, she thought he was dead. She fell on her knees beside him, a prey to such grief that the secret of her love escaped her. She took one of his apparently dead hands and kissed it and sobbed. She murmured all the tender words that she had never before addressed to him even in thought, all the passionate affection she had hidden in her heart. She called him her only love and the one thing that she cherished in life. If she lost him she would lose everything. She would never love another man; she would not survive him! And in her despair she did not perceive that Luc, whom she was moistening with her tears, had come to himself, and was listening to her with infinite affection, but with infinite sadness.

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Then he murmured, though his voice was hardly louder than a breath:

"You love me? Ah! poor, poor Sœurette!"

But she, happy in the surprise of finding he was still living, did not regret her avowal, so happy was she that she need no longer conceal anything from him and so sure that her love was so great that she could keep herself from ever being to him a cause of suffering.

"Yes, I love you, Luc," said she; "but what can it matter about me? You live, and that is all I ask. I am not jealous of what may make you happy. Oh, Luc! do but live, and I will be your servant."

At this tragic moment, when he thought that death was near him, the discovery of this love, so silent, so absolute, love bestowed like that of a guardian angel, filled him both with tenderness and regret.

"Poor, poor Sœurette! Oh! my divine, but unhappy friend!" he murmured, with a weak voice.

The door opened, and in came Dr. Novarre, who was very much affected, and at once began to examine the wound, assisted by Sœurette, whom he knew to be an experienced nurse. The room was very silent; it was a time of unspeakable anguish. Then there came unexpected relief, for the doctor said there was hope. The knife had struck the shoulder-blade, and had then been turned aside, so that it had not pierced any vital organ. It had merely lacerated the flesh, yet the wound was frightful. The shoulder-blade was broken, and this might lead to complications. Although there was no immediate danger, recovery would certainly be slow. But what happiness it was to know that death was averted!

Luc held Sœurette's hand, smiling feebly at this good news.

"And my kind Jordan," said he; "does he know?"

"No, he has heard nothing yet. He has shut himself up for three days past in his laboratory. But I will bring him here. Oh, my friend! how happy I am in the assurance given us by the doctor!"

She was sitting, happy, with her hand in his, when

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again the door opened, and this time it was Josine who came in. She had hastened hither on first hearing of the assault, overwhelmed and beside herself. What she had long dreaded had now happened! Who could have told her secret? And Ragu had taken the life of her husband, her child's father! Her life was over. She had no longer anything to hide. She would die there by his side.

On seeing her Luc gave a slight cry, and letting go Sœurette's hand, he suddenly stretched out his arms.

"Ah! Josine, it is you! You have come back to me!"

She staggered forward and fell on the bed at his side. He understood her mortal anguish, and reassured her.

"You have come back to me, Josine, with the dear little one. But do not despair. The doctor says I am going to live, to live for both of you."

She heard him and heaved a great sight, as if the breath of life had come back to her. Ah! was she now to realize her secret hopes? Life had been very hard, but its hardships might have been the preparation for happiness. He lived, and that cruel stab might be the means of uniting for life two beings who seemed formed for each other.

"Yes—yes, I have come back to you, Luc," said she. "We have come. It is all over. We will never leave you, for we shall no longer have anything to hide. Do you remember how I promised to come back whenever I knew that you had need of me; when I should be no longer a danger, an embarrassment, but a help? All other ties are broken now. My place is beside your pillow."

He was greatly moved, and so filled with joy that tears came into his eyes.

"Ah! dear, dear Josine," said he, "love and happiness have come to me with you."

But on a sudden he remembered Sœurette, and, raising his eyes, saw her standing on the other side of the bed. She was pale, but stood smiling. With an impulse of affection he again took her hand.

"My kind Sœurette, this is a secret that I have wished to hide from you."

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She trembled slightly, but simply said:

"Oh! I knew it. I saw Josine one morning coming from your house."

"What! did you know?"

And then he guessed all. He felt a deep pity for her, and infinite admiration and tenderness. Her self-denial, the love that she preserved for him and which she showed him by unbounded affection, giving up all her life to him without looking for return, touched him, and raised her in his eyes as a woman capable of the greatest heroism. Leaning over him, she whispered, softly:

"Do not fear, Luc. I knew. I shall be only the most devoted, the most sisterly of your friends."

"Ah! Sœurette!" he repeated, in a voice almost indistinct; "ah! my divine and unhappy friend!"

When the doctor saw him so much moved he interfered, and forbade him absolutely to talk. The good doctor smiled discreetly, for he fancied that he understood what was going on. His patient had a sister and a wife to take care of him, but he must be reasonable and not bring on a fever by too much emotion. Luc promised to be very good. He ceased to speak, but cast loving glances at Josine and Sœurette, his two angels, one on the right and the other on the left side of his bed.

There was a long silence. The blood of the young apostle had been shed; he had passed through his time of suffering, and henceforth his course might be one of triumph. As the two women gently performed little services around him, the wounded man opened his eyes and smiled at them. Then he went to sleep, whispering as he did so:

"Love has come at last, and now we shall be conquerors."

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V

COMPLICATIONS set in, and Luc came near dying. For two days he was believed to be past hope, and neither Josine nor Sœurette left his bedside. Jordan himself, abandoning his laboratory, which he had never done before since his mother's last illness, came to sit beside his friend's couch. The grief of these kind hearts was acute as they waited from hour to hour expecting to close the eyes of one whom they loved so tenderly.

La Crêcherie was thrown into confusion by the news of the injury that Ragu had inflicted upon Luc. The work went on as usual the next morning in the workshops, but the workmen were unanimous in their manifestation of affection for the victim, which they displayed by a constant desire for news of his condition. The foolish and unprovoked attack, the blood which had been shed, stimulated the existence of friendly feeling in a manner that years of humanitarian experiment could not have succeeded in doing. Sympathy was expressed even in Beauclair, and many people thought kindly of this young man, so handsome, so active, and in the prime of life, whose only crime, apart from his efforts for justice, was his affection for a very lovable woman whose husband ill-treated her with outrages and blows. Upon the whole, no one was surprised or shocked at Josine's installing herself at Luc's bedside. On the contrary, this seemed very natural, for was he not the father of her child, and had they not both purchased, at the cost of their tears, the right to be together? On the other hand, the gendarmes sent in pursuit of Ragu had failed to find any trace of him; all efforts made in this direction during the past two weeks had been in vain; and the mystery seemed to be solved at length

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by the discovery, at the bottom of a ravine in the Monts Bleuses, of the body of a man half eaten by wolves, which the police claimed to recognize as the remains of Ragu. A certificate of registry of death could not be drawn up, but the story was circulated and believed that Ragu was dead, as a result of an accident or of suicide committed during madness caused by his crime. Then, if Josine was a widow, why should she not marry Luc, and what reason was there that the Jordans should not receive them under their protection? The tie between the two was so natural, so strong, and thenceforward so indissoluble, that later on it occurred to no one that at first they had not been legally married.

At last, on a fine morning in February, when the sun was shining brightly, Dr. Novarre pronounced Luc's recovery assured, and this was confirmed some days later by his complete convalescence. Jordan, much relieved, had returned to his laboratory. Sœurette and Josine were left alone, both full of happiness, but greatly fatigued by loss of rest. Josine especially, who had refused to spare herself, had suffered much in silence. At last there came a morning, bright with the sunshine of an early spring, when her strength failed her completely, after she had brought Luc for his breakfast the first egg that the doctor had permitted; she was forced to allow Sœurette to remove her into the adjoining room. When Dr. Novarre arrived for his daily visit he found two patients instead of one, and only a short time elapsed before a faint cry was heard, the first cry of a new voice which is raised to greet the light. In Luc, whose whole being was tense with expectation, this sound aroused a sensation of exquisite joy.

"A son, a son?" he cried, with delight.

"Certainly," answered Dr. Novarre. "It is a son; it is a little man."

Some little time later Sœurette brought the child to his father. Her pure heart was so full of love that she herself was radiant with the happy issue of the event, and to be a sharer in Luc's happiness occasioned her a heavenly

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joy. And when, after he had kissed the child, he said to her, tenderly, in his overpowering delight:

"Sœurette, my dear friend, let me embrace you, too; you have been so much to me, and I am so happy."

She answered in the same tone of tenderness and joy:

"My dear Luc, embrace me if you wish; we are all so glad."

The weeks that followed were filled with all the pleasures of a double convalescence. As soon as the doctor allowed Luc to get up he passed an hour each day in an arm-chair beside Josine, who was still in bed. An unusually early spring filled the room with sunshine, and there was always on the table a bunch of exquisite roses, which the doctor brought each day from his garden, as a prescription, he said, for youth, health, and beauty. It was now the child, the little Hilaire, who inspired them both with fresh strength and hope. Luc was making continual projects for the future; and while he was waiting to be able to go to work he kept repeating that he would be thereafter perfectly content, since he was certain that he should establish the city of justice and of peace, because he himself was in possession of love, a perfect wealth of love, in Josine and little Hilaire. The child is a necessity to the foundation of anything; it is the living spring of action, widening and continuing life, and forming the connection between to-day and to-morrow. It is only those who have children who can really labor for human happiness; it is they alone who will succeed in saving mankind from iniquity and wretchedness.

The first time that Josine, entirely recovered, was able to begin her new existence, side by side with Luc, the latter clasped her in his arms, crying:

"Ah, you are mine alone; you have never been anything but mine, since your child is mine! We are now entirely one, and we fear nothing more at the hands of fate."

When Luc was able to resume the direction of the works he was received with the warmest sympathy on all sides, and this did him a great deal of good. But it was not only

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the baptism of blood which he had received that caused the continuous progress of La Crêcherie and insured its success. A fortunate occurrence which combined to do this was that the mine became a source of enormous wealth, owing to the discovery of extensive lodes of excellent ore, which Morfain had always said would be the case. From this time on, both iron and steel were produced so cheaply and of so fine a quality that the Pit found itself threatened even in its manufacture of objects of fine steel at a high price. All competition between the two became impossible. Then again, there was a great democratic impetus, which multiplied ways of communication, an endless extension of railroads, and a tenfold increase in the construction of bridges, buildings, and entire cities, in which iron and steel were employed in large and constantly increasing quantities. From the time that Vulcan's descendants first melted iron in a hole in order to forge weapons therefrom to defend themselves and to conquer both the animate and inanimate world, the uses of iron have steadily increased in extent; and in the future, when science shall have provided means for its production at a nominal cost, and for its adaptation to all purposes, iron will prove to be the source of justice and of peace. But what brought about the prosperity and triumph of La Crêcherie, above all, were natural causes, such as a better administration, more truth, more equity, and more solidarity. Its success lay within itself, from the day that it was called into being, under the transition system of a wise association between capital, labor, and intelligence, and the dark days through which it had just passed, with obstacles of all kinds and crises that had seemed to be mortal, were simply the ordinary obstructions of the road, which are inevitable during the early stages of any march, and which it is a necessity to endure if it is desired to reach the goal. Now it became apparent that the good work was and had always been full of vitality, and it stood forth on a firm basis, replete with vigor, in sure promise of a future harvest.

It had now become an object-lesson, a successful ex-

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periment, which was gradually to convince the whole world. How was it possible to deny the strength of this association of capital, labor, and intelligence when the profits arising from it were becoming greater year by year, and the workmen at La Crêcherie were already gaining double what their comrades were at the other works? How was it possible not to recognize the fact that the system of eight hours' labor, of six hours', or three hours', a system of labor made enjoyable by diversity of employment and the attractive surroundings of light, cheerful workshops, and machines that children could operate, was the very foundation of future society, when the wretched wage-earners of yesterday were seen becoming healthy, intelligent, cheerful, and gentlemen in this progress towards total liberty and justice? How was it possible to deny the necessity of co-operation, which would suppress intermediary parasites, through whom so much wealth and effort are lost, when the general stores were operating without impediment, increasing tenfold the welfare of the poverty stricken of yesterday and providing them with all the enjoyments that had hitherto been reserved for the rich alone? How was it possible to witness the happy reunions at the Communal House, with its libraries, its museums, its halls for amusement, its gardens, its games, and its recreations of all kinds, without being convinced that the results of a community of interest were to render life attractive and make it one long enjoyment to the dwellers upon earth? And, lastly, how was it possible that instruction and discipline should not be inspired with a new life when they were no longer based upon the idleness of man, but upon his inextinguishable craving for knowledge, when study was made attractive by permitting each pupil to follow his individual bent, when the two sexes, who ought to be brought up side by side from infancy, were taught together, when the schools, relieved from the oppression of too many books, and combining lessons with recreation and with a first training in apprenticeship, became altogether prosperous, each succeeding generation being thus stimulated to attain that ideal

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city towards which humanity has been progressing through so many ages?

So the extraordinary example that La Crêcherie was daily giving in full view of everybody was becoming contagious. It was no longer a matter of theory; it represented a fact which was being accomplished, under the eyes of all, and which, now that its period of full floresence had been reached, was continuing to expand without any check. As a natural result of all this the association was, by degrees, gaining both men and neighboring land, and new workmen were presenting themselves in crowds, attracted by the profits and welfare; and new buildings, springing up in every direction, were added continually to those first constructed. The population of the town doubled in three years, and its progress in all directions was advancing with incredible rapidity. It was the city of the future, the city of reorganized labor; it was the city of finally achieved happiness that springs naturally from the earth. Around the enlarged works, the city was in the way of becoming a metropolis, the central heart, the source of life, and the dispenser and regulator of social existence; the workshops, the large manufacturing buildings increased in number, and covered acres of ground, while the little houses, bright and cheerful in the midst of the verdure of their gardens, multiplied rapidly in accordance with the increase in numbers of the workmen and employés of all kinds. The town, little by little, outstripped its own borders, and advanced towards the Pit, threatening to absorb it. At first there had been vast barren tracts between the two works, which consisted of the uncultivated land owned by Jordan at the bottom of the slopes of the Monts Bleuses. Then a few houses were built just outside La Crêcherie, others appeared adjoining them, and still others, until there arose a line of buildings which went on encroaching like a rising tide, until it was only two or three hundred yards from the Pit. Would not the latter soon, when the waves began to beat against it, be submerged and swept away, to be replaced by the triumphant accomplishment

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of health and joy? Old Beauclair itself also was menaced, for a whole section of the rapidly growing city was moving against it, and was about to sweep away that dark and fetid quarter, the nest of suffering and disease, under whose crumbling walls the wages system was now dying hard. Luc sometimes watched the advance of this budding city, of which he was the creator and the founder, developing as he had seen it in his dream upon the evening when his work had been decided on. He could hardly believe that it was realized, and that it stood before him as a part of the conquest of the past, sprung from the soil of the Beauclair of the future, the happy dwelling-place of a happy human race. All Beauclair would eventually become part of it. Situated as it was between the two promontories of the Monts Bleuses, the whole estuary between the Brias gorges would in time be covered with cheerful houses surrounded with verdure, and extending as far as to the wide, fertile plains of Roumagne. It might be that years and years would still be required for this, but he saw already, with the eyes of a seer, that happy city which he had called into existence by his will, and which was steadily advancing.

One evening Bonnaire brought to him Babette, Bourron's wife, who said, with her air of perpetual good-humor:

"Monsieur Luc, my husband would like very much to return to work at La Crêcherie; but he does not dare to come and speak to you himself, for he remembers that he behaved very badly when he left you. So I have come."

Bonnaire added:

"You must forgive Bourron, for he was under the influence of that wretch Ragu. Bourron is not bad, he is merely weak; and there is no doubt that we can still save him."

"Bring back Bourron by all means," eried Luc, cheerfully. "I am very far from wishing for the death of the sinner! I should never abandon a man who was the victim of his boon companions, without opposing any resist-

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ance to the idlers and drunkards. He is a good recruit, and we will make an example of him."

Luc had never felt so delighted, for this return of Bourron seemed to him decisive, although the workman was an indifferent one. If he could be saved, if he could be reformed, as Bonnaire thought, would not this be a triumph over the wages system? And thus one more house was added to his town, one tiny stream joining itself to the other streams and swelling the flood which would eventually sweep away the old world.

Another evening, a little later on, Bonnaire came to beg him once more to admit a workman from the Pit. But this time the recruit was such a pitiful one that he did not press the point.

"It is that poor Fauchard," said he. "You remember him. He walked around La Crêcherie several times, but could not form a resolution. He was afraid to choose, so greatly had grinding labor, always the same, stupefied and crushed him. He is no longer a man, but a piece of machinery, warped and out of true. I am afraid that nothing good can be gotten out of him."

Luc reflected, and recalled to mind his early days at Beauclair.

"Yes, I know him; he has a wife, Natalie, has he not? A careworn, melancholy woman, always seeking credit. And he has a brother-in-law, Fortuné, who was only sixteen when I saw him, but was already pallid and stupefied, so entirely was he even then the victim of mechanical and precocious labor. Oh! the poor creatures! Well, let them all come to us; why should they not do so? It will be another example, even if we cannot make a free and happy man out of Fauchard!"

Then he added, with an air of pleasantry:

"Still another family, still another house added to the others. The town grows populous, does it not? Bonnaire, we are in a fair way to enjoy that large and beautiful city of which I have so often spoken to you from the outset, and which you refused to believe in. Do you remember? The experiment left you uneasy, and you

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worked with me only from a sense of duty and gratitude. Are you convinced now?"

Bonnaire, a little annoyed, did not answer immediately. However, he at length said, with his habitual frankness:

"Is a person ever convinced? He must have tangible results. No doubt the works are prosperous, our association is expanding, the working-people live better, and there is something more of justice and happiness. But you know my opinions, Monsieur Luc: you are still working on the accursed wages system, and I see no signs that a collectivist society is on the way."

However, it was theory alone that was now defending itself in him. If, as he maintained, his opinions remained unchanged, he showed at least that he had admirable faith in labor, activity, and courage. He was the workman hero who, by setting his comrades a friendly example of community of interest, had really been the leading spirit in the achievement of La Crêcherie's victory. When he made his appearance in the workshops, so tall, so strong, and so good-natured, all hands were held out to greet him, and he himself was already more converted than he was willing to admit. He was overjoyed at seeing his comrades suffering less, enjoying every pleasure, and living in healthy houses with flowers around them. He therefore could not leave until the wish of his life should be fulfilled, and that was that there should be less poverty and more justice.

"Yes, yes, a collectivist society," laughingly said Luc; "we shall realize that and shall realize it better; and if we do not do it ourselves, our children will see to it, the little ones whom we are bringing up for that purpose. Have faith, Bonnaire; say to yourself that henceforward the future is ours, since our town is steadily on the increase."

As he spoke he called attention with a broad sweep of the hand to the roofs of the houses adorned with colored earthen tiles, so brilliant in the setting sun, amid the young trees. These houses were always present in his thoughts; they were an actuality which seemed to have

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sprung from the ground at the touch of his breath, and which he saw progressing under his eyes, like a pacific army, whose function it was to sow the seed of the future upon the ruins of old Beauclair and the Pit.

But if at La Crêcherie the industrial population had triumphed alone, it would have been simply a fortunate event, with consequences open to discussion. What rendered the event decisive and far-reaching was that the peasant population of Combettes was sharing in the victory, in the common effort, and in the association that had been formed between the village and the works. Here also there was only a beginning; but what a promise of prodigious fortune! From the day on which the mayor, Lenfant, and his associate, Yvonnot, reconciled by the necessity of a mutual understanding if they wished to continue the struggle for existence, had induced all the small land-owners of the commune to form an association, and to join their little parcels of land to each other, so as to form one single large tract of several hundred acres, the land had shown an extraordinary fertility. Up to this time, and especially of late years, the soil had seemed completely exhausted, as was the case over all the immense plain of Roumagne, formerly so fertile, now to all appearance completely sterile, and covered with a scanty, thorny stubble. All this, however, was in reality only the effect of the idleness, indifference, and obstinate ignorance of man, of his superannuated methods, and the lack of fertilizers, machines, and good judgment. Therefore what a lesson it afforded, from the time that the associates of Combettes began to cultivate their domain in common! They bought fertilizers very cheap, and procured tools and machines from La Crêcherie in exchange for the bread, wine, and vegetables with which they furnished it. Their present prosperity arose from the fact that from the moment that they assumed the bond of a joint interest they were no longer isolated, and that the tie between the village and the works was thereafter indestructible. They represented the long-dreamed-of alliance between the peasant and the artisan, the peasant

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who gives the grain by which man is fed, and the artisan who gives the iron by means of which the land must be tilled in order that the grain may be raised. If La Crêcherie had need of Combettes, Combettes would not be able to exist without La Crêcherie. The union between them once accomplished, it would give rise to the happy social conditions of the future. And already what a wonderful spectacle was presented by this once desolate plain, this almost abandoned town, the one covered with a rich harvest, the other occupied by prosperous people! In the midst of other lands lying desolate through disunion and negligence, Combettes appeared like a little island of luxuriant verdure, and the people in the adjoining country regarded it with wonder, which by degrees was succeeded with envy. Such aridness, such sterility yesterday, and such vigor, such fertility to-day! Therefore, why not follow the example of Combettes? The neighboring communes became interested, asked questions, and wished to imitate. Fleuranges, de Lignerolles, and de Bonneheux began to be spoken of as places where the mayors were drawing up plans for co-operation and collecting signatures. Soon the little green sea would spread and join itself to other seas, and its green flood would go on continually increasing in strength, until the whole of Roumagne, as far as the eye could see, would be one single territory, one single peaceful ocean of grain, large enough to sustain an entire population. This time was, indeed, approaching, for the land which was so carefully tended was itself beginning to progress.

Luc often took long walks for pure pleasure across the fertile fields, where he sometimes met Feuillat, Boisgelin's farmer, who would also be taking his ease, with his hands in his pockets, contemplating, with his silent and enigmatical air, the beautiful crops growing on these well-cultivated lands. Luc was aware what a large share he had taken in the action of Lenfant and Yvonnot, and he also knew that it was by Feuillat's advice that they were still guided. Therefore it was a constant source of surprise to him to see in what a wretched condition Feuillat

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was leaving the land that he had leased—that domain of Guerdache, the poor fields of which, now almost sterile, seemed like a barren desert as compared with the rich domain of Combettes.

One morning, as both of them were following a road which separated the two properties, engaged in conversation, Luc could not refrain from making a remark about it.

"Tell me, Feuillat," he said, "do you not feel ashamed of the bad condition of your property, when the land belonging to your neighbors, upon the other side of the road, is so admirably cultivated? Your own interest alone, I should think, would stimulate you to the active and intelligent labor of which I know you to be capable."

The farmer at first merely smiled. Then he ventured to speak without fear.

"Oh, Monsieur Luc, shame is too refined a sentiment for us poor creatures; and as to my own interest, that lies in drawing nothing but a bare existence from these lands which are not mine. What I aim to do is to cultivate them sufficiently to have daily bread, and no more, for it would be foolishness to till them, to fertilize them, and to make excellent lands of them, when all that would simply enrich Monsieur Boisgelin, who can turn me out whenever my lease expires. No, no, if one undertakes to make a field a good field, it must be one's own, or, better still, it must belong to every one."

And he proceeded to jeer at and make fun of those who say to the peasants, "Love the land! love the land!" He wished very much to love it himself; but all the same he wished to be loved by it in return—that is to say, he did not wish to love it for others. He repeated several times that his father, his grandfather, and his great-grandfather had lived under the rod of the exploiters, and had received nothing in return but wretchedness and tears. For himself, he had seen enough of this sweating system, this sacrifice of a dupe upon the altar of farming, this loving, tending, fertilizing of the land by the farmer,

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in order that the land-owner, with his wife and child, might enjoy all its riches.

A silence ensued. Then he added, in a low voice, with an air of concentrated passion:

"Yes, yes, the land must belong to every one if it is to be loved and cultivated once more. As for myself, I shall wait."

Luc looked at him, much struck by his remarks. He perceived a keen intelligence behind his reserved manner. He was also sensible that behind the simple and slightly cunning peasant nature there was a fine instinct for diplomacy and a clear vision into the future which was storing up the experiment at Combettes for a distant end known to himself alone. He suspected the truth, and he wished to be certain of it.

"Then if you leave your land in such a condition," said he, "it is because you think that it will be compared with the adjoining property, and eventually included in it? But is not that a dream? Combettes will never spread so as to swallow up Guerdache."

Feuillat once more smiled, and then, as if not wishing to say anything further, remarked:

"No doubt great changes would have to take place between now and then; but who knows what may happen in the end? I shall wait."

And, after several minutes, he resumed, taking in the horizon with a broad sweep of his hand:

"What is once set in progress cannot be stopped. Do you remember the desolate prospect that was once to be seen here, in those miserable pieces of land with their scanty crops? And now look, behold! with community of land and of cultivation, with the aid of machinery and science, there is an abundant harvest, and all the surrounding country is being, little by little, taken in. Ah, it is a splendid sight!"

His passionate affection for the soil, which he cherished in secret, from a jealous desire to love it for itself alone, shone in his eyes, and found expression in the enthusiasm of his voice. The great wave of fertility manifested in

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that field of wheat was a large element in Luc's prosperity. If he felt that he was firmly established at La Crêcherie, it was because his storehouse was full of grain, and his little population of artisans, having become also a little population of peasants, were assured of daily bread. And his delight in seeing the progress of his city, with its steadily advancing tide of new houses, which in time would overcome the Pit and Beauclair, was not greater than that which he experienced on coming to contemplate the fertile fields of Combettes, which also were steadily on the increase, and including by degrees the adjoining land, and little by little merging their harvests into a boundless ocean extending from one end of Roumagne to the other. It was the same effort, the same civilization drawing near, the humanity that leads to truth and justice, to peace and to happiness.

The most immediate effect of the success of La Crêcherie was to show the small manufactories in the vicinity the advantage that they would receive from following its example, and associating themselves with their larger neighbor. The Chodorge establishment, a nail manufactory, which bought all of its raw material from its powerful sister, set the example by allowing itself to be definitely absorbed in a community of interest. The Hausser establishment, which had formerly forged sabres and was now making a specialty of pruning-knives and scythes, next entered the association, and became, as it were, a natural extension of the great neighboring forge. There were some difficulties with the house of Miranda & Co., which manufactured farming utensils, for one of the two owners was a man of reactionary ideas, and struggled against all novelties; but a crisis became so imminent that he retired, in terror of inevitable ruin, and the other partner saved his manufactory by not losing a moment in consolidating with La Crêcherie. All these establishments thus drawn into the movement for association and co-operation acted in unison, and accepted the same regulations, such as the division of profits, based on the union of capital, labor, and intelligence. The re-

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sult was that they became a single and united family, divided into a hundred different groups, always ready to receive new adherents, and by this means capable of indefinite extension. They afforded a definite example of reconstructed social conditions, anticipating those of the future, re-established upon a new organization of labor, and advancing steadily towards the freedom and happiness of humanity.

In Beauclair, which was both astonished and disconcerted, uneasiness at last became overwhelming. For what would be the result of all this? Would La Crêcherie continue steadily to increase, to be augmented by every little manufactory which it met upon its road, now this, now that, now another? Would the town itself and the vast neighboring plain be absorbed, and become nothing more than the dependencies, the domain, the very substance of La Crêcherie? Hearts were sore, and thinkers began to ask themselves where lay the real interest of the individual, and in what was his possible fortune. In the little world of tradesmen, and, above all, of contractors, perplexity increased, in face of a daily diminution of receipts; and it became a vital question with each one whether he would not soon be obliged to close his shop altogether. Therefore the consternation became general when it was known that Caffiaux the grocer, who also kept the *cabaret,* had just come to an understanding with La Crêcherie, by which his house was to become a simple depot, a sort of branch of the general stores. He had for a long time been regarded as the chief man of the Pit, acting, to a certain extent, as spy for the management, by poisoning the working-man with alcohol and then selling him to his employers; for the *cabaret* is the firmest support of the wages system. At all events, the man was untrustworthy, ever on the lookout for the victory of the strongest side, continually alert for treachery, and ready to change sides at any time with the ease of a turncoat who cannot accept defeat. And that he should so readily have gone over to La Crêcherie redoubled the distress of the anxious people, who were laboring under the neces-

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sity of taking sides sooner or later. Everything indicated a movement towards association, which would no doubt proceed with increasing rapidity as a result of the multiplied force of its own momentum. The beautiful Madame Mitaine, the baker's wife, had waited for Caffiaux's conversion to inform herself of what was going on at La Crêcherie, and was disposed to enter the association, although her bakery was still prosperous, thanks, no doubt, to her renown for beauty and goodness, by means of which she had made it popular. The butcher Dacheux alone remained obstinate, in the gloomy rage consequent upon the overthrow of all his ideas. He said that he would prefer to die in the midst of his last quarters of meat upon the day when there should no longer be a *bourgeois* to be found who would give him his price, and this prospect seemed actually likely to be realized, since, as his customers were gradually leaving him, he was seized with such fits of rage that he was in positive danger of a sudden attack of apoplexy.

Dacheux one day betook himself to the Laboques', where he had begged Madame Mitaine meet him. The moral and commercial interests of the whole town, he said, were concerned. Rumor reported that the Laboques, in order to avoid a failure, were on the point of making peace with Luc, and of joining his association, in such a manner as to become simple depositories of La Crêcherie. Ever since the latter had been exchanging directly their iron and steel, their implements and machinery, for bread furnished by Combettes and other villages in the syndicate, the Laboques had lost their best customers, the peasants in the neighborhood, without mentioning the small housekeepers among the Beauclair middle-class, who effected a great saving by dealing with the shops at the works, which, by a brilliant idea of Luc's, were opened to every one. This caused the death of trade, as it had been understood up to that time, for it did away with any middleman between the producer and the consumer—that is, with the person who raised the value of living, and himself lived like a parasite on the necessities of others. He

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was now a useless piece of machinery, whose disappearance was certain from the moment when experience should demonstrate with what facility he could be abolished in the interest of others. And the Laboques bewailed themselves in the midst of their deserted shop.

When Dacheux arrived, the wife, dark and thin, was at the counter, entirely unoccupied, not having even spirit left to knit stockings, while the husband, with eyes and nose like a ferret, went and came like a troubled spirit, looking along cases of merchandise which were covered with dust.

"What is this I hear?" cried the butcher, purple with rage. "You are going to betray us, Laboque; you are on the point of giving in! You who lost your lawsuit against this robber, you who swore the death of him, you are going to desert simply to save your own skin! Is it you who are going to turn against us and complete our ruin?"

Laboque, in his despair, gave way to a storm of rage.

"I have enough trouble; leave me in peace! As to that idiotic lawsuit, it was forced upon me by all of you. Now you do not supply me with enough money to pay my expenses at the end of the month. Then, why do you come and talk to me about saving my own skin?"

He waved his hand towards the unpurchased merchandise.

"There is my skin," said he, "and if I do not bestir myself the sheriff's officers will be here next Wednesday. Yes! it is true, since you wish to hear it from me, yes! I am negotiating with La Crêcherie; I have made terms, and I shall sign the contract this evening. I am still hesitating, but I shall be worried into it at last."

He let himself drop into a chair, while Dacheux, stupefied and choked with passion, could find nothing to stammer forth but oaths. Then Madame Laboque, in her turn, from behind her counter, gave vent to her complaint in a low, monotonous voice.

"After working so hard; just think of it! We had so much trouble at first, when we began by selling hard-

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ware from village to village And then, later, we had such a struggle to open this shop and to build up the business year by year! Still we had our reward; it did increase, and we could even cherish a dream of buying a house in the open country in order to retire upon our investments. Then, all at once, everything crumbles to pieces, and Beauclair goes mad. I have not yet been able to understand why."

"Why, why!" stormed Dacheux; "because this is a revolution, and the *bourgeois,* who do not dare to defend themselves, are cowards. For myself, if I am pushed too far, I shall take one of my knives one of these fine mornings, and you shall see what will happen."

Laboque shrugged his shoulders.

"It's a fine business," said he. "It is all very well when one has the world on his side; but when a man feels that he is going to be left entirely alone, the best thing he can do is to go the way others go, no matter how angry he may be. Caffiaux understood this very well."

"Ah, that drunkard of a Caffiaux!" howled the butcher, seized with a fresh fit of rage. "He is a traitor; he has been bought and paid for! You know that this robber, Monsieur Luc, gave him a hundred thousand francs to abandon us."

"A hundred thousand francs," repeated the ironmonger, with flaming eyes, and an affectation of sceptical irony. "I should like very much to have them offered to me, and I should take them fast enough. No, it is foolish to be obstinate, and the part of wisdom is to keep always on the side of the strongest."

"What wretchedness, what wretchedness!" resumed Madame Laboque, in her dolorous voice. "The whole world is beginning to turn inside out for sure; and it is the end of the world."

The beautiful Madame Mitaine, who entered at that moment, overheard these words.

"What! the end of the world?" said she, cheerfully. "When two of our neighbors have just had, each of them,

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a fine boy! And your children, Auguste and Eulalie, how are they? They are not here?"

No, they were not there; they were never there. Auguste, who was nearly twenty-two years old, and held trade in horror, had been seized with a passion for the mechanical arts; while Eulalie, who at fifteen was already sufficiently prudent to be an excellent housekeeper, spent most of her time with an uncle, a farmer, at Lignerolles, near Combettes.

"Oh, the children," Madame Laboque continued to complain; "if one relied upon children!"

"They are all ingrates!" declared Dacheux, in indignation, caused by the fact that his daughter Julienne, a tall, handsome, affectionate girl, was not at all in his own style, and still played with the little unfortunates who were abandoned in the Rue de Brias. "When one relies upon children, he is sure to die of grief and poverty!"

"But I assure you that I depend upon my Evariste!" answered the baker's wife. "He is nearly twenty years old, and we are not angry because he has refused to learn his father's trade. These young people are naturally full of ideas that are different from ours, since they are born for epochs in which we shall not exist. For myself, I ask nothing of Evariste except that he shall love me dearly, and that is just what he does."

She then explained her own affairs to Dacheux. If she had come there at his request, it was only in order to make it clearly understood that every tradesman of Beauclair must retain entire liberty of action. She had not as yet joined the association at La Crêcherie, but she intended to enter whenever she pleased, and she was only waiting for the time when she should be convinced that such action was in the interest of others and of herself.

"It is perfectly plain," said Laboque, when she concluded, "that I cannot do otherwise, and I shall sign this evening."

Madame Laboque began again her incessant plaint. "I have already told you that the world is turning inside out; this is the end of the world!"

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"Oh no, no!" cried the beautiful Madame Mitaine once more. "Why should you wish the world to end, since our children will soon be of an age to marry, and will have children, who will marry and have children in their turn? One generation succeeds the other; the world constantly renews itself, and that is all there is about it. This is the end of one world, if you choose."

These concluding words fell so clearly and distinctly that Dacheux, in the last extremity of passion, and with his eyes bloodshot from the pressure of an impending stroke of apoplexy, rushed out of the room, slamming the door behind him. It was assuredly the end of one world, the end of iniquitous and unsound commerce, of the commerce by which the fortune of the few is made by the misery of the greater number.

There was one last blow still to upset Beauclair. Up to that time the success of La Crêcherie had interfered only with similar industries, and with the retail trade, which is dependent upon the daily custom of the street. So the feeling was intense when one fine morning it was learned that Mayor Gourier had fallen a victim to the new theories. He himself, standing on a firm basis, and having, as he proudly declared, no need of any one, had no intention of association with La Crêcherie. But he established beside it a like association, and placed his large shoe-factory in the Rue de Brias on a system of shares, calculated on the now established basis of capital, labor, and intelligence, thus making a threefold division of profits. This was simply the creation of a new division, the clothing division, besides those of iron and steel, and was similar to them in all respects; and the resemblance became more marked when Gourier succeeded in syndicating all the clothing industries—the tailors, the hatters, the hosiers, the linen merchants, and the haberdashers. Moreover, another division still was spoken of, which a great mason contractor was engaged in establishing, by associating with the masons all the various building industries, such as stone-cutters, joiners, locksmiths, plumbers, roofers, and painters, a vast division which also included

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architects and artists, without mentioning marble-workers, cabinet-makers, upholsterers, workers in bronze, and even clock-makers and jewellers. There was nothing in all this but a logical growth. The example of La Crêcherie had sown the prolific idea of division, of associations graded in natural groups, and of groups growing out of these again, the result simply of imitation and the need of the utmost enjoyment possible of life and happiness. The law of human creation acted, and it would certainly always act with increasing energy, if the human race required it for its happy existence, and even now it was becoming evident that a mutual bond had been established among these groups, a common tie which, while leaving them independent, would one day reunite them in a vast social reorganization of labor, the unique code of the future city.

But the idea of escaping from La Crêcherie by imitating it was more than the brain of Gourier could have evolved. Public opinion had it that he must have been acting under the advice of the Sub-prefect Châtelard, who was burying himself deeper in the shade and in tranquil indifference, in proportion as Beauclair became transformed under the vital breath of the future. And it was correctly divined that this had taken place at a little breakfast of three, in the house of the mayor, and at which the two men were seated opposite each other, there being no one else present except the still beautiful Leonore.

"My dear friend," the sub-prefect had remarked, with his amiable smile, "I believe that we are at a deadlock. At Paris everything is going wrong, everything is on the road to ruin, and it is the wind of approaching revolution that is going to sweep away what remains of the old decaying structures now falling into ruins. Here, our friend Boisgelin is a poor, vain creature, whose last sous that little Madame Delaveau will spend. No one but her husband is ignorant of the fact as to where the profits of the Pit are going. He is making a heroic struggle against failure, and you will soon witness some disaster. Therefore, it would be certainly very foolish not to think

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of one's self, if one does not wish to be drawn into the whirlpool."

Leonore manifested some uneasiness.

"Are you in danger yourself, my friend?" she inquired.

"I? Oh no! No government would take the trouble to occupy itself with my unworthy person, for I have the smallest possible amount of administrative talent. I always say just the same thing as my superiors, so that I pass for a caricature of each minister. I shall die here, at last, forgotten and happy under the ruins of the last ministry. But it is you yourselves of whom I am thinking, my good friends."

He proceeded to explain his idea, and to enumerate all the advantages that there would be in forestalling the revolution, and making another La Crêcherie of the Gourier shoe-factory. The profits would undergo no diminution, but quite the contrary. Moreover, he himself had undergone conviction, and professed himself too intelligent not to understand. The future was at hand, the reorganization of labor would end by sweeping away the old and iniquitous *bourgeois* society. This peaceful and sceptical functionary, whose inactivity was so absurd and so well considered, had ended by becoming a genuine anarchist, although he concealed the fact under an exterior of diplomatic reserve.

"You are aware, my good Gourier," concluded he, laughing, "all this will not prevent my declaring myself against you, openly, when you have completed this masterstroke of passing over to the new society. I shall say that you are a traitor, or else that you have lost your mind; but I shall congratulate you when I come here, since you will have played a famous trick, which will bring you in rich returns. You will see their downfall!"

Nevertheless, Gourier, much bewildered, would not consent, and discussed the matter for a long time. All his past protested, all his long reign as an employer revolted at the idea of being nothing more than the associate of hundreds of workmen, whose absolute master he had been up to this time. But under his thick skull he had a

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mind acute in business matters, and saw very well that he would risk nothing, but, on the contrary, would assure the safety of his house against the dangers of the future by following Châtelard's wise advice. And, then, he himself was touched by the wind now blowing, by that exaltation, that passion for reform, whose contagious fever in revolutionary epochs deranges the very classes that are going to be dispossessed. Gourier ended by believing that the idea was his own, since Leonore, by the advice of her friend Châtelard, repeated this to him day and night, and he proceeded to act upon it.

His action caused a scandal in the entire Beauclair *bourgeoisie*. Proceedings against it were begun, and Judge Gaume was entreated to interview the mayor upon the subject, since the sub-prefect had formally refused to take part in the unfortunate business, which he declared loudly to be scandalous, saying further that he did not wish to compromise the administration in regard to it. But the judge, who was now living a very retired life, and who had seen no one since his daughter Lucille, repudiated by her husband, had had to take refuge with him, refused to make any representations to the mayor, which the latter would doubtless receive with a bad grace. Then strong measures were employed. The judge's son-in-law, Captain Jollivet, as a result of his wife's conduct, had thrown himself into the reaction with increasing fury. He contributed such articles to the *Journal de Beauclair* that the publisher, Lebleu, uneasy at the turn affairs were taking, and feeling himself under the necessity of being on the strongest side, had one day closed his door to him, being desirous of changing sides and passing over from the party belonging to the Pit to that belonging to La Crêcherie. Disarmed and idle, the captain was airing his impotent wrath when the idea occurred to him that he alone could influence the judge to take sides, for he had not broken completely with his father-in-law, but still exchanged salutations with him. Charged with this delicate mission, he therefore presented himself formally at the judge's house, and did not reappear for two whole

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hours, during which time he extracted nothing but evasive responses from his father-in-law, although he effected a reconciliation with his wife. The latter returned the next day to her husband's house, the captain having pardoned her for the offence which had caused her withdrawal, on a formal promise that it should not occur again. All Beauclair was amazed at this *dénouement*, and the affair ended in great laughter.

It was the Mazelles who at length succeeded in interrogating Judge Gaume, but they did so by accident, and without having been intrusted with any mission. The judge was in the habit of going out every morning, and on reaching the Boulevard de Magnolles, which was a long, deserted avenue, he walked up and down indefinitely, his head bowed and his hands behind his back, in a gloomy reverie. His shoulders were bent as though under a load of trouble, and he seemed borne down by a feeling that his entire life had been a failure, and by a sense of the evil which he had done and of the good which he had been unable to do. And when, for a moment, he raised his eyes, looking forth into the distance, he seemed to expect something out of the unknown future that did not appear and which he could not see. Now, on this particular morning, the Mazelles, who had risen early to go to church, ventured to approach him, in order to ascertain his opinion on public affairs, so greatly were they afraid of meeting in these matters some personal disaster.

"Well, monsieur, what say you of what is going on?"

He raised his head, and looked for a moment into the distance. Then, continuing his gloomy reverie, and thinking aloud, as though no one were listening to him, he said:

"I say that the tempest of truth and justice which will sweep away this abominable world is very long in coming."

The Mazelles, petrified with astonishment, and believing that they did not understand, stammered out:

"What, what! You intend to frighten us because you

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know that we are a little timid? Yes, that is true, and people joke us about it."

But Gaume had already recovered himself. Observing the Mazelles standing frightened before him, with pale faces, and perspiring with apprehension as to their money and the continuation of their life of indolence, his mouth contracted with an expression of disdainful irony.

"What are you afraid of?" resumed he. "The world will last for another twenty years, and if you are living then you will find consolation for the annoyances of the revolution by being witnesses of some interesting things. It is your daughter who should be anxious about the future."

Madame Mazelle, in great distress, exclaimed:

"Exactly, but Louise does not distress herself about it at all. No, not at all! She is hardly thirteen years old, and she finds all that is now taking place very amusing when she hears us talking of it from morning till night. She laughs, while we are in despair. Whenever I say to her: 'But, poor, unfortunate child, you will not have a sous,' she answers me with a skip like a kid: 'It is all the same to me, and I shall be the merrier for it.' She is very well behaved, all the same, although she gives us very little comfort."

"Yes," said Gaume, "she is a child who dreams of making her life for herself. There are others like her."

Mazelle remained perplexed, fearful that he was the subject of a joke again. The thought that he had made a fortune in ten years, and that since then he had enjoyed that delicious life of idleness dreamed of from his youth, that his happiness as an idler might cease, and that he would, perhaps, be obliged to go to work again, if every one else worked, threw him into a state of deep anguish, which was like a first chastisement.

"But securities, monsieur—what will become of securities, in your opinion, if all these anarchists succeed in turning the world upside down? You remember that this Monsieur Luc, who is now playing so base a part, also made fun of us by claiming that all incomes would

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be suppressed. Now that would be as bad as if our throats were cut in some nook in the woods."

"Sleep in peace, then," replied Gaume, with quiet irony; "the new society will provide for you if you don't care to work."

The Mazelles then proceeded to church, for they had been burning candles there for the recovery of Madame Mazelle since the day when Dr. Novarre had had the rudeness to tell her that she was not ill. Not ill! when she had an ailment that she had cherished with affection for years, for which, indeed, she lived, and to such a degree that she had at last come to find therein her occupation, her delight, and her very reason for existence. The doctor must have believed her to be incurable, since he gave her up; and, seized with terror, she betook herself to religion, in which she was finding the utmost consolation.

There was another promenader on the Boulevard de Magnolles, which was but rarely resorted to by pedestrians, and that was the Abbé Marle, who came there to read his breviary. But he often let the book fall, and, walking slowly, lost himself in the depths of a gloomy reverie. Since these last events, the movement arising from them, which impelled the whole town towards a new destiny, had emptied his church to an even greater extent than before; there was hardly any one left in it, in fact, except the very old townswomen, obstinate and stupid, together with a few women of the *bourgeoisie,* who upheld religion as the last rampart of the world of fashion now in process of destruction. When the last of the faithful should have deserted the Catholic churches and they became the ruins of a dead society abandoned to brambles and nettles, another civilization would begin. Therefore, in the face of such a danger, neither the old townswomen nor the few women of the middle class consoled the Abbé Marle for the desolation which he perceived to be increasing around his God. It was in vain for Leonore, the wife of the mayor, to lend the decorative effect of her imposing presence to the Sunday cere-

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monies, and it was in vain that she opened her purse wide for the maintenance of divine worship. The abbé was not in the least ignorant of her unworthiness, of her bad reputation, which was accepted by the whole town, and which he had been obliged himself to cover with the mantle of his sacred ministry, but which he reproved as a sin for which he held himself responsible. The Mazelles were even less satisfactory to him, owing to their childishness and their pitiable egoism, which caused them to come to him only from the hope of deriving from Heaven some personal gratification, and investing their prayers, as they did their money, in order to obtain some income therefrom. All men and all women were thus, in this expiring society, destitute of that true faith which, in the first centuries, founded the power of Christ, and were without that inclination for abnegation and absolute obedience which is necessary, to-day especially, for the omnipotence of the Church. He no longer concealed the fact from himself that the days were numbered; and that if God did not in mercy call him soon to Himself, he would perhaps be present at a frightful catastrophe when the steeple should fall, pierce the roof of the nave, and crush the altar.

This was the gloomy reverie that he had been indulging in for hours. He had buried it in the deepest depths of his being, endeavoring to conceal from himself the hopeless state of things. He affected to remain brave, haughty, and indifferent to the events of the day, under the pretext that the Church was founded for eternity. When he met the school-master Hermeline, who did not quail before the success of the methods of La Crêcherie, and was on the point of passing over to the reactionary party, in the name of the safety of the republic, he no longer argued with his former bitterness, but pretended to refer all to God; for God was certainly permitting such anarchic saturnalia for the purpose of destroying His enemies and of afterwards causing His triumph to be witnessed of man. Dr. Novarre jokingly hit the nail on the head by saying that the abbé was abandoning Sodom on

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the eve of the rain of fire. Sodom was the old pestiferous Beauclair, the *bourgeois* Beauclair devoured by egoism, an entire town condemned to destruction, the site of which would have to be rendered healthy if it were desired to see the city of health, happiness, justice, and peace spring up in its stead. All the symptoms were indicating a final crash. The wages system was in its death agony, the distracted middle class was becoming revolutionary, the *sauve-qui-peut* of interests was drawing the live forces of the country over to the victors, and what remained—that is to say, the worn-out and useless materials and scattered rubbish—was going to be swept away by the wind. The radiant Beauclair of to-morrow was already springing from the ruins. When the Abbé Marle, walking under the trees on the Boulevard de Magnolles, let his breviary fall, slackened his pace, and half closed his eyes, it was surely this vision, which, rising up before him, overwhelmed him with grief.

Sometimes Judge Gaume and the abbé met in these silent promenades in the wide solitude. At first they did not perceive each other, but they continued their walk in parallel lines, each with his head bowed and his eyes so fixed that nothing reached them from the outside world. Each was wrapped up in his own despair, his regret for the world which was disappearing, and his appeal to the world that was now to be born. The religion now finished was unwilling to die, and the justice to come was desperate at so prolonged a delay. At last they raised their heads and recognized each other, and it became necessary that they should exchange a few words.

"The weather is gloomy, monsieur; we are going to have rain."

"I am afraid so, Monsieur Marle. This month is very cool for June."

"Oh, well! what can you expect? All the seasons are upset just now. Nothing is as it should be any longer."

"That is true; yet life goes on, and the kindly sun will, perhaps, put everything back in its place."

Then each resumed his solitary walk, falling back into

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his own reflections, and in this way displayed openly the eternal struggle between the future and the past.

But it was especially at the Pit that the noise of the evolution taking place at Beauclair resounded as the latter became gradually transformed by the reorganization of labor. At every new success of La Crêcherie, Delaveau had to display more activity, and more intelligence and courage; and, naturally, everything that was causing the prosperity of the rival works was resulting in disaster to himself. It was for this reason that the discovery of excellent lodes in the old abandoned mine had given him a terrible blow, by lowering the price of raw material. He could no longer compete with the iron and steel of commerce, and he even found himself affected in his manufacture of guns and shells. Orders for these had been diminishing ever since the money of France had been directed especially towards constructions of a peaceful character and of interest to the community at large, such as railroads, bridges, and buildings of all kinds in which iron and steel were triumphing. The worst of all was that such orders, which were divided among a few houses only, were no longer sufficiently profitable to the latter; and they finally formed the project of ruining one of themselves in order to clear the market; and since the Pit was, just then, the least solvent, it was the Pit that the competing forges decided ruthlessly to destroy. Delaveau's difficulties were becoming so much the greater in that his workmen were no longer remaining faithful to him. Ragu's murderous assault had caused, as it were, a stampede among those of his companions whom he had left behind. Then, when Bourron, rendered wiser and converted, had left them in order to return to La Crêcherie, taking Fauchard with him, a movement had been initiated, and the majority began to ask themselves why they should not imitate him, since so many advantages were awaiting them. The experiment was now a brilliant success; the workmen at La Crêcherie were earning double wages by laboring no more than eight hours, without counting the advantages which they were en-

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joying, such as their pleasant little houses, their cheerful schools, the Communal House, in which some entertainment was always in progress, the general stores, where the retail prices were one-third less than elsewhere, and, finally, so much health and comfort. Figures count; and the workmen at the Pit demanded an increase of wages, since they wished to earn as much as those of La Crêcherie. As it was impossible to satisfy them, a great many left, and naturally went where they would find most prosperity. What paralyzed Delaveau in particular was the absence of any reserve funds, for he would not consent to declare himself vanquished; he would have held out for a long time, and have triumphed in the end, he thought, if he had had but a few hundred thousand francs on deposit, to aid him in bridging over the present crisis, which he perisisted in believing temporary. But how could he fight, how could he pay his bills at maturity, in bad times, when money was lacking? The money already borrowed and the debt thus created was, in addition, a terrible dead weight — a burden that was crushing him. Yet he was fighting like a hero, always at the front, giving his intelligence and his life in the hope of yet saving the crumbling past that he was upholding, with its attributes of authority, wages, social conditions, both *bourgeois* and capitalist, and in the rigidly honest desire to make the capital intrusted to him yield the income that he had promised.

In the main, Delaveau's worst suffering was due to his inability to put into Boisgelin's hands the profits which he had pledged himself to pay; and his disappointment was cruelly intensified at such times as he was obliged to refuse the latter money. Although the last balance-sheet showed disaster, Boisgelin had no intention of retrenching the expenses at Guerdache, being excited to resistance by Fernande herself, who was treating her husband like a beast of labor, which must be goaded till the blood comes in order to extract every bit of exertion from it. Ever since Ragu's outbreak, her own share in which was hidden and secreted in the innermost depths of her be-

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ing, she had appeared as if maddened with delight, and she had never shown herself so ardent and so insatiable. She looked rejuvenated and beautiful, with something of a desperate gleam in her eyes, as if of an impossible and ever insatiate desire. To the friends of the house she appeared to be very restless; and the Sub-prefect Châtelard said in confidence to Mayor Gourier that this little woman would certainly commit some great imprudence, from which they would all suffer. Up to this time she had done nothing worse than change her own house into an inferno, by her ardor in instigating Boisgelin to make continual demands upon her husband for money in order to gratify her extravagance, the result of which was to throw Delaveau into such a state of exasperation that he stormed about it at night, even after he had sought his pillow. She maliciously goaded him by inconsiderate observations, and thus turning the knife in his wound. And yet he continued to adore her, and to treat her like a thing apart, without possible blemish, in the worship which he rendered to her subtle, delicious charm.

November came with unseasonably cold weather. This month the bills payable were so heavy that Delaveau felt the earth tremble under him. He had not the money on deposit necessary to meet them. The evening before the maturity of his obligations he shut himself up in his private office in order to reflect and to write letters, while Fernande went, by invitation, to dine at Guerdache. That morning, without her knowledge, he had gone there himself and had had with Boisgelin a decisive conversation, in which, after a plain exposure of the whole situation, he had at length decided the latter to reduce his expenses. Delaveau's idea was to assign to him for a few years a suitable allowance, and he even advised him to sell Guerdache. And now, alone in his office, after his wife's departure, he was walking up and down with slow steps, and at intervals, with a mechanical movement of his hand, stirred the coke fire which was burning in a sheet-iron stove placed in front of the fire-place.

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The only safety possible for him was to obtain time, by writing to the creditors, who surely would not wish to see the works closed. But, as he was in no haste, he would write the letters after dinner; and so he continued his reflections, going from one window to the other, and always returning to stand before the one from which he saw the extensive grounds of La Crêcherie, as far as the distant park and cottage in which Luc himself lived. In the clear, intense cold, the sun had set in a sky of crystal purity, the pale golden light bringing out with infinite delicacy the newly established town against a background of purple. Never had he seen anything of the kind so clear and so instinct with life, for he could have counted the delicate individual branches of the trees, and distinguished the least details of the houses, whose bright-colored decorations of pottery made them so gay. There was one moment when, as the oblique rays of the sun fell upon them, all the windows lighted up as though they were on fire, and seemed to send forth sparks like a hundred fireworks. It resembled an apotheosis, a glory; and he remained standing there, holding back the cretonne window-curtains, with his face pressed against the glass, as though assisting at a triumph.

Just as Luc, down below, on the other side of the grounds of La Crêcherie, sometimes looked at the town that he had called into existence, and perceived that it was threatening soon to absorb the Pit, so Delaveau, in his turn, came often to look at it also, as it was steadily advancing and carrying with it the threat of conquest. How many times during these last years had he stood lost in oblivion before this window, in order to take in with his eyes the ominous horizon; and each time had seen the advancing tide of houses rising higher and higher and gradually approaching the Pit. It had started from afar, at the extreme end of the vast uncultivated and deserted lands; one house had appeared, like a little wave, then another, and another. The line of white façades had elongated; the wavelets had multiplied indefinitely as they pushed forward and hastened on their

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journey; and now they had covered the entire space. They were not more than some hundreds of yards distant, and had grown to be a real sea of incalculable power, ready to bear away before it everything that might oppose its passage. It represented the irresistible invasion of the morrow, by which the whole past would be swept away, and the Pit, together with Beauclair itself, be replaced by the young, triumphant city. Delaveau estimated its approach with a gloomy shudder of prevision of the day when the danger should become mortal. He had hoped for a moment, at the period when La Crêcherie was passing through so severe a crisis, that the movement would cease; but the town began to advance again with such an impetus that the old walls of the Pit were set trembling thereby. Still, unwilling to give way to despair, he braced himself against all evidence, flattering himself that his own energy would furnish the necessary bulwark. But on this particular evening he was under the spell of a disquietude that was dispiriting to him, and he had now come to feel a deep regret. Had he not been wrong in ever allowing Bonnaire to leave? He recalled the prophetic words of this simple and strong man at the time of the great strike; and the fact that it was on the next day that Bonnaire had assisted in establishing La Crêcherie by his excellence as a workman. Since that time the Pit had done nothing but decay. Ragu had disgraced it by an attempt at assassination, and Bourron, Fauchard, and others were now abandoning it as a place of ruin and malediction. In the distance the growing town was ever glistening in the sun; and he was seized with a sudden anger, the violence of which restored him to himself, and to the beliefs of his whole existence. No, no! he had been right; the truth was in the past; nothing would ever be extracted from men except by bending them to authority; and the wages system remained the law of labor, aside from which there was nothing but madness and catastrophe. He closed the heavy cretonne curtains, since he wished to see no more, lighted his little electric lamp, and abandoned himself

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to reflection in his tightly closed office, which the hot stove was raising to a high temperature.

After dinner Delaveau seated himself at his desk for the purpose of writing the letters in regard to which he had been maturing plans for hours. Midnight struck, and he was still there, completing his dull and wearisome correspondence. His doubts had again returned, and fear was once more besetting him. Would salvation afterwards be really attainable, even admitting that the delay he asked for were granted him? The superhuman effort that he was making to save the Pit had fatigued him to the point of exhaustion, and letting his forehead fall into his hands he remained sunk in the depths of anguish. At this moment was heard the sound of a carriage and of voices. It was Fernande, who was returning from her dinner at Guerdache, and who was sending the maids to bed.

When she entered the office she did so with the abruptness of movement and nervousness of speech which belong to a woman entirely beside herself, who has been restraining and nursing her anger for hours.

"Phew! how hot it is here! How is it possible for you to stand such a fire?"

She threw herself into an arm-chair, and, as she did so, unfastened and cast aside the magnificent fur mantle that covered her shoulders. She then appeared adorable, and of a marvellous beauty, clad as she was in white silk and lace, and with her neck and arms bare. It was a piece of extravagance at which her husband was not astonished, and which he did not even perceive, since he loved her but for herself, and regarded her as an exquisite being, in whose presence a passionate feeling had always rendered him obedient, without either sense or judgment. And never had she been more intoxicatingly beautiful than at this moment. But when, still seated at his desk, he had looked at her for a minute, with his head still buzzing, he became uneasy.

"What is the matter with you, love?"

She was visibly upset. Her large, deep blue eyes, hab-

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itually so caressing, shone with a sombre glow. Her small mouth, wreathed usually in tender, deceitful smiles, was half open, and displayed perfect teeth of unalterable brilliancy, with a gnawing expression. Her beautiful oval face, with its border of black hair, was expressive of a necessity for violence.

"What is the matter with me?" said she, at last, in tremulous tones. "Nothing."

A silence ensued; and in the dead quiet of winter there was heard the rumbling of the Pit at work, the vibration of which shook the house continuously. They themselves were not conscious of this, so used to it had they become. But on this particular night, although orders had greatly diminished, the twenty-five-ton steam-hammer had just been set in operation, in order to forge the barrel of a large gun in haste. So the ground was trembling, and the vibrations caused by each blow seemed to resound even in the office, echoing through the light wooden passageway that connected it with neighboring buildings of the works.

"There is something the matter with you," resumed Delaveau. "Why don't you tell me what it is?"

She made a motion of furious impatience, and answered:

"Let us go up-stairs to bed; that will be the best thing to do."

But she did not move. Her hands were feverishly twisting her fan, while a short breath heaved her bare throat. At last she told him what was choking her.

"You went to Guerdache, then, this morning?"

"Yes, I went there."

"Then what Boisgelin has just told me is true? The works are in danger of bankruptcy, we are on the brink of ruin, and affairs have reached a pass at which it will be necessary for us to live on bread, and to wear nothing but woollen clothes!"

"Yes, I was obliged to tell him the truth."

She was trembling, but put a restraint upon herself, so as not to break out at once into reproaches and insults. It was

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all over, then, and her happiness was menaced and destroyed. Guerdache would no longer give *fêtes,* dinners, balls, or hunts. Its doors would be closed, for had not Boisgelin owned to her that he might perhaps be obliged to sell it? And it was all over, too, with her return to Paris, in possession of millions. All that she had believed to be within her grasp—fortune, luxury, and a continued round of pleasure, was giving way. She was conscious of nothing around her but ruin, and that Boisgelin had just exasperated her further by his weakness and the cowardice with which he bowed his head under disaster.

"You never tell me anything about our affairs," replied she, harshly. "This has fallen upon my head as if the ceiling had given way. It makes me appear like a fool. Now what are we going to do? Please tell me."

"We are going to work," answered he, simply; "there is no other possible salvation."

But she was scarcely listening any longer. "Has it been possible for you to believe for a moment that I would ever consent to have nothing fit to put on my back, to wear shoes run down at the heel, and to begin over again all that poverty, the remembrance of which is a nightmare to me? Ah, no, indeed! I am not like you people, and, shall not do it! You and Boisgelin must arrange matters between you. I shall not return to poverty."

She continued to give vent to what was passing in her distracted mind. It was her wretched youth and the odious experience, buried up to the present in the depths of her memory that she now recalled, when she had allowed herself, at the age of twenty, while still dependent upon her mother, first to be led astray and then abandoned. It was her deliberately calculated marriage with this Delaveau, whom she accepted in spite of his ugliness and his inferior condition, because of her need of support and of a husband whom she could utilize. The prosperity of the Pit had been her stroke of good-fortune; her calculation had been right, her husband had been the means of giving her victory. She had conquered Boisge-

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lin, and looked on Guerdache as her own, with every luxury and every pleasure. For twelve years this enjoyer and perverter, with her fund of innate cruelty, had tasted of what was rare and exquisite, satisfying her immoderate appetites, appeasing the deep rancor accumulated since childhood, happy in her lies, perjuries, and betrayals, and in the disorder and ruin that she caused, happy especially by reason of the tears that she had brought to the eyes of Suzanne. But now that was all over; she would return, defeated, into her former poverty!

"Come! Settle the matter between you! Settle it!" cried she. "I am not going to go without clothes, and I shall retrench absolutely nothing of my expenses!"

Delaveau, whom she was beginning to render impatient, shrugged his powerful shoulders. He had rested his massive, bull-dog head, with its projecting jaws, upon his clinched fists, and looked at her with his big brown eyes, his face flushed by the hot fire, and half hidden in the fringe of his black beard.

"My wife," said he, at last, "you are quite right; do not let us speak of these things now, for you do not seem to be quite reasonable this evening. You well know that I love you very much, and that I am prepared to make any sacrifice to spare you from suffering. But I hope that you will be willing to resign yourself to doing as I do, for I am going to fight to the bitter end. If it is necessary, I will get up at five o'clock, will live on a crust of bread, will give my entire day to the hardest labor for our support, and will go to bed at night contented. Heavens! to think that you should be obliged to wear plainer dresses and to go on foot! Yet you told me only the other evening of your weariness and disgust for these pleasures, which are always the same."

This was true. Her blue eyes, generally so caressing, darkened again until they became almost black. For some time she had been nursing a deep rancor against Delaveau and Boisgelin, who no longer amused her, and she felt a growing annoyance at the thought that no one ever would amuse her and gratify her desire for new sensations.

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This was why she had received with insulting disdain Boisgelin's lamentations when he explained to her his annoyance and his despair at being obliged to reduce his style of living. And this was why she had returned in so violent and so spiteful a mood, swelling with the desire to carp at and destroy some one.

"Yes, yes," stammered she, "these pleasures are always the same. Ah, it is not you who will give me any new ones!"

In the works the steam-hammer was continuing to strike its heavy blows, with which the earth trembled. Long had it forged her pleasures, causing the steel to sweat the riches of which she was greedy, while the dark herd of workmen were giving their lives in order that she might live hers in free and unrestricted enjoyment! For a moment she heard the doleful sound of labor in the midst of the deep silence; and then her cruel hatred of her husband returned.

"What has happened is your fault!" cried she. "I said so to Boisgelin. Had you begun by strangling that miserable Luc Froment, we should not have been upon the brink of ruin. But you have never known how to carry on your business."

Delaveau suddenly rose, but resisted the outburst that he felt coming.

"Let us go up-stairs to bed," said he. "You will end by driving me to say things that I shall afterwards regret."

Still she never moved, but continued her abuse, and became so bitter and so aggressive in accusing him of having caused the unhappiness of her life that he ended by exclaiming, brutal in his turn:

"But, after all, my dear, when I married you, you had not a single sou, and I was obliged to buy even your underclothes. You were going to be turned out upon the street, and where would you be now?"

Outraged by this, with her breast heaving, and with a murderous expression in her eyes, she answered:

"Do you think that, as beautiful as I was, and the daughter of a prince, I would have accepted a man like

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you, ugly, common, and without position, if I had had even bread to eat. Look at yourself, dear sir! I have wished you well, because you agreed to secure for me a fortune and a royal position. And if I tell you all this, it is precisely because you have not kept any of your engagements."

He had placed himself in front of her, and let her go on, clinching his fists and forcing himself to keep cool.

"You understand," repeated she, with a furious persistence. "None of your engagements—none! And no more with Boisgelin than with me, for it is really you who have ruined him, poor man! You influenced him to give you his money, and you promised him a fabulous rate of interest, and now he is not going to have enough wherewith to buy shoes. My dear sir, when a man is not capable of managing a large business, he remains a petty employé, and lives in his hole along with a wife, ugly enough and fool enough to wash the children and darn stockings. This is bankruptcy, and it is your fault, you understand—yours, and yours alone!"

He could contain himself no longer. What she was saying to him so fiercely was turning the knife in his heart and in his conscience. To hear her, whom he had loved so passionately, speak of their marriage as a vulgar bargain, in which he, upon his side, had furnished nothing but necessity and calculation! He who for nearly fifteen years had been working so loyally and so heroically to keep the promise made to his cousin, to be accused by her of bad management and incapacity! He grasped her two bare arms with both hands, shook her, and said, in a low voice, as if he feared that the sound of his own words might madden him:

"Unhappy woman! Be silent! Do not drive me mad!"

But she in her turn had risen and disengaged herself, stammering with anger upon feeling the pain caused by the vise-like grip with which he had held her, and upon seeing her two white and delicate arms circled with red.

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"You beat me now, you blackguard, you brute! Oh! you beat me, you beat me, do you?"

She thrust forward her beautiful face, convulsed with rage, and poured forth her disdain right into the face of the man whom she would have liked to tear in pieces. Never had she execrated him more, and never had she been irritated to such an extent by his massive, bulldog-like breadth of shoulder. Her pent-up rancor rose still higher, impelling her to wind up with some irreparable insult. And her cruelty sought for the poisoned wound, for that which would make him suffer most severely and most audibly.

"You are nothing but a brute!" said she. "You are not fit to manage a workshop of as many as ten men!"

At this remarkable insult, Delaveau was seized with a burst of convulsive laughter, to such a degree that it seemed to her stupid and childish. This raised Fernande's exasperation to such a point that she became beside herself. What could she say to him, then, in order that the blow might prove mortal and stop his laughter?

"Yes!" cried she. "It is I who made you what you are, and without me you would not have remained manager of the Pit for a single year."

He laughed even more loudly.

"You are mad, my dear," replied he. "You say such absurdly foolish things that I do not pay any attention to them."

"Oh! I say foolish things, do I? It is no thanks to me, then, that you have kept your place?"

The revelation leaped quickly to her lips. She would scream into his dog's face that she had never loved him, and that she was the mistress of another man! This was the stab that would silence his laughter. She enjoyed a horrible, ferocious pleasure in the idea, and it afforded her some consolation in the total destruction of her life, whose foundations were giving way under her.

"The things I say, my dear sir, are so little foolish that your Boisgelin has been my lover for twelve years!"

Delaveau did not comprehend all at once. He was

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stunned by so atrocious an insult flung straight into his face.

"What is that you say?" cried he.

"I say that your Boisgelin has been my lover for twelve years, and since he is ruined, and since everything is going to pieces, well! you see for yourself everything is at an end!"

Delaveau rushed upon her, stammering, with his teeth clinched, and, beside himself in his turn, he seized her in his arms, shook her violently, and threw her into the arm-chair. He would have liked to bruise her bare neck and arms with his fists, to hinder her from insulting and torturing him further. The veil arising from his prolonged confidence, his prolonged credulity, was at last torn aside, and he saw clearly, and understood. She had never loved him, and her existence beside him had never been anything but hypocrisy, dissimulation, deceit, and treason. The natural savageness, the gloomy anger, and the brutality of his instincts were suddenly aroused against this woman, who was so beautiful, so refined, so exquisite, this woman whom he adored, whom he idolized. He saw in her all that of which he had for so long been ignorant; she was a corrupter, a poisoner, who had slowly corrupted all around her, and her treacherous, cruel nature had found its enjoyment in the tears and sufferings of others.

It was she who, even now, was insulting him, in the stupor that overwhelmed him.

"With your fists, is it? Brute that you are! With your fists—like one of your own workmen when they are drunk!"

Then, in the midst of the terrible silence, Delaveau heard the measured blows of the steam-hammer—that movement of labor which had incessantly lulled him day and night. It all came to him from afar off, like a well-known voice, whose clear accents had just finished telling him the whole terrible experience. Was it not Fernande whose hard little teeth of unalterable enamel had devoured all the wealth that this hammer had forged? The

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burning thought possessed his brain that she had been the devourer, was the origin of misfortune, and was responsible for the millions wasted, and the inevitable failure that was at hand. While he was devoting himself heroically to keep his promises, working eighteen hours a day, and struggling to save the old order of things that was crumbling away, it was she who was undermining the structure, and who was acting as the decay affecting the whole. She had lived there beside him, with her tranquil manner and tender, smiling countenance, and yet she was all the while the active poison, the destroying power, which was undermining all that he attempted, paralyzing his efforts and enfeebling his strength. Yes, ruin had been always present with him, at his table and in his bed, and he had not seen it; yet she had shaken and loosened everything with her pliant white hands and her little white teeth. The remembrance came to him of the nights when she would return from Guerdache, intoxicated with her lover's caresses, with wine drunk, and waltzes danced, and money squandered with open hand, while he, innocent and imbecile, lay beside her with eyes wide open in the darkness, torturing his brain to save the Pit, and avoiding even a movement for fear of disturbing her sleep. And the thought of all this made him cry out in overwhelming horror and mad rage:

"You are going to die!"

She raised herself in the chair, her elbows resting upon the arms, her skin bare, and her exquisite face, shaded by her beautiful dark hair, once more thrust forward.

"I am quite willing! I have had enough of everything —of you, of other people, of myself, and of life! If to live is to be miserable, I should like better to die."

And he, becoming more and more beside himself, repeated, with a shriek:

"You are going to die! You are going to die!"

But having no weapons, he turned round, looking about the room in search of them. There was no knife, he had nothing but his two hands with which to strangle her, and then what would become of him? Would he be resigned

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to live afterwards? One knife would have served for both of them. She saw his difficulty and his momentary hesitation, and triumphed, for she did not believe that he would ever find courage enough to kill her. She began to laugh in her turn, a laugh of irony and insult.

"Well, you are not going to kill me, after all? Kill me, then! Kill me, then, if you dare!"

All at once, in his frantic quest, he caught sight of the little stove, where there burned such a grate full of coke that the overheated room was already like one on fire. A sudden frenzy took possession of him, which made him forget everything, even his daughter, his adored Nise, sleeping peacefully above in her little room on the second floor. Oh! to put an end to himself, to annihilate himself, in the midst of this horror, this rage that possessed him! Oh! to conduct this execrable woman to death, so that she should no longer injure others, and to go with her himself, and to live no longer, since life was, henceforward, sullied and ruined.

She continued to lash him with her contemptuous laugh.

"Kill me, then! Kill me, then! You are far too great a coward to kill me!"

"Yes, yes," said he to himself, "let everything be burned, everything be destroyed; let there be an immense fire, in which the house and the works will disappear, in which the ruin this time will be absolutely complete, the ruin that this woman and her imbecile lover have compassed! Let there be a gigantic funeral pyre, where I myself will fall in ashes, with this perjured woman, this murderess and destroyer, amid the smoking ruins of the old dead society which I have had the imbecility to protect!"

With a terrible kick he upset the stove and threw it into the middle of the room, repeating his cry:

"You are going to die! You are going to die!"

The burning coke was scattered over the carpet in a red layer. Pieces of it rolled up to the window. The cretonne curtains caught fire first, while the carpet was set afire also. Then the furniture and the walls blazed

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up with lightning-like rapidity. The house, being very lightly built, quickly caught fire in turn, and crackled and smoked like a bundle of fagots.

It was a fearful scene. Fernande, beside herself with fear, sprang up, and, gathering together her skirts of silk and lace, searched wildly for some path which the flames had not yet attacked. She rushed towards the door leading to the vestibule, feeling sure that she had time to escape, and that with one bound she would be in the garden. But there, before the door, she found Delaveau, whose arm barred the passage. His appearance was so terrible that she rushed towards the other door, which opened on the wooden gallery connecting the office with the adjacent buildings of the works. But this path of escape was already closed; the gallery was on fire, and it acted as a chimney, with such a draught of air that the offices belonging to the superintendent were threatened. She came back to the middle of the room, blinded, suffocated, stumbling, and filled with anger at feeling her dress burning, and her unbound hair in its turn taking fire and covering her bare shoulders with burns. Then she gasped in a frightened voice:

"I will not die! I will not die! Let me pass, assassin! Assassin!"

Once more she threw herself against the door of the vestibule, and tried to force her way out, tearing at her husband, who remained standing there, immovable, in his ferocious determination. He did not speak, except to repeat, calmly:

"I tell you that you are going to die!"

Since, in her struggles to escape, she was digging her nails into his flesh, he had to seize her by force, and, having done so, carried her back once more to the middle of the room, which was now changed into a brazier. A dreadful struggle took place there. She fought with a strength made tenfold greater by the fear of death, and sought for the doors and windows with the instinctive leap of a wounded animal; while he held her by force amid the flames, where he was resolved to die, and where

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he wished that she should die with him, in order to annihilate at once an existence now horrible for both. His two arms were none too strong, for the walls began to yawn, and for at least ten times he pulled her away from the exits. At length he pinned her in his arms, and squeezed her in a last embrace—he who had adored her, and who had so often before held her in this manner. They fell amid the embers of the floor, clasped in each other's arms. The hangings on the walls, blazing like torches, finally consumed them, and the timber-work let fall upon them a shower of glowing firebrands. He did not loosen his hold upon her even in death, but clung to her tightly, and transported her into the other oblivion, each burning and consuming in the same avenging fire. At length the end came; the blazing beams above gave way, and the whole ceiling fell upon them.

It happened that on this very night Nanet, who was serving his apprenticeship at La Crêcherie, as a practical electrician, was coming out of the machine-room when he saw a great red light at one side of the Pit. His first thought was that it was a glare from the cementing furnaces. But the light increased, and then all at once he understood; it was the manager's house that was burning. The thought of Nise struck him with a sudden shock; he began to run like mad, and dashed himself against the partition wall, which both of them, in times past, had climbed over so boldly in order to meet. He scaled it again, without knowing how, assisting himself with his hands and feet. He found himself in the garden, still alone, no alarm having as yet been given. It was, indeed, the house that was burning, and what was appalling was that it was blazing from the ground floor to the roof, like an enormous funeral pyre, without a sign of any one stirring within. The windows remained closed; the door was not open, and, as it was already in flames, no one could get in or out. Nanet thought that he heard loud cries and what appeared to be an agonizing struggle. At last the Venetian blinds belonging to one of the windows on the second floor were hastily pulled up, and Nise ap-

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peared in the smoke, deadly pale, and dressed in nothing but her chemise and petticoat. She leaned out in terror and called for help.

"Don't be afraid! don't be afraid!" cried Nanet, wildly. "I am coming up!"

He had noticed a long ladder lying beside a shed, but when he attempted to take it up he found that it was chained. There was a moment of terrible distress. He seized a large stone and hammered with all his strength upon the chains in an effort to break them. The flames roared, the entire first floor was taking fire, and there arose such a redoubled outburst of sparks and smoke that Nise, standing up above, disappeared at times from sight. Nanet was all the time hearing cries from her that maddened him, and so he hammered and hammered, and cried, as he did so:

"Wait! wait! I am coming!"

The chain gave way, and it was possible for him to raise the ladder. He never understood afterwards how he had succeeded in placing it upright. It must have been by a miracle that he erected it under the window. Then he saw that it was too short, and his despair was such that for a moment he wavered in his bravery of a hero of seventeen determined to save his little lady-love of thirteen. He lost his head, and knew nothing further.

"Wait! wait! That is nothing. I am coming!"

Just at this moment one of the two maids, whose attic opened upon the roof, got out of her window, and clung to the edge of the gutter, and, in the madness of terror, believing that the flames were already upon her, leaped suddenly into space, landing near the flight of steps at the entrance, with her skull fractured, and was killed instantly.

Nanet, more and more alarmed by Nise's outcries, believed that she also was going to jump. He seemed to see her lying bleeding at his feet, and uttered a final agonizing appeal:

"Don't jump, I am coming, I am coming!"

He ran up the whole length of the ladder, and when

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he reached the blazing first floor entered it through one of the windows, the glass of which was shattered by the intensity of the heat. Help was beginning to arrive, and a great many people were already to be seen on the road and in the garden. There were some minutes of terrible anxiety, as the crowd witnessed the saving of one child by another, in the courage of madness. The fire was steadily gaining, the walls were beginning to crack, and the ladder itself seemed afire as it stood empty and upright against the front of the house, where neither the boy nor the girl reappeared. At last Nanet returned, carrying Nise on his shoulders, just as one carries a lamb. He had succeeded, in spite of the fact that the interior of the house was now a furnace, in ascending one flight, grasping her, and descending again; but his hair was singed, his clothing was burning, and after he had slid down rather than descended the ladder, round by round, with his beloved burden, both were covered with burns, and fainted in each other's arms, clasped in an embrace so tight that it was necessary to carry them together to La Crêcherie, where Sœurette, who had been instantly summoned, came to take care of them in the infirmary.

A half-hour later the whole house was destroyed, not a stone remained standing. The worst thing of all was that the fire, after having communicated itself by the passage-way to the administration building, continued to advance by the adjacent sheds, and was now consuming the great hall in which were located the puddling-furnaces and the rolling-mills. The entire works were threatened. The fire raged among the ancient buildings, which were almost all of wood and dilapidated and calcined. It was said that the Delaveaus' other servant, having found means of escape to the kitchen, had been the first to give the alarm to the night gang, which had rushed from the Pit. But the workmen had no fire-engine, and were obliged to wait for their neighbors at La Crêcherie, who came with brotherly haste, led by Luc himself, to the assistance of the rival works, bringing with them the fire-engine and its crew—one of the creations of La Crêch-

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erie. The firemen from Beauclair, whose organization was very imperfect, did not arrive until after some little time. It was altogether too late, since the Pit was blazing like an immense brazier, from one end to the other of its buildings, which covered several acres, and from which nothing emerged but the lofty chimneys and the tower for tempering guns.

At the break of day, after this night of disaster, numerous groups were still stationed before the half-extinguished fire, under the gloomy and frosty sky of November. The authorities of Beauclair, including the Sub-prefect Châtelard and Mayor Gourier, had not left the place of the conflagration; and Judge Gaume was with them, as was also his son-in-law, Captain Jollivet. The Abbé Marle, who had not been summoned until too late, did not arrive until daybreak, and was soon followed by a crowd of sightseers, made up of the well-to-do, the shopkeepers, the Mazelles, the Caffiaux, and Dacheux himself. Struck with a feeling of terror, all were talking in a low voice, and their greatest anxiety was to know in what manner such a catastrophe could have occurred. There remained but one witness, and that was the servant-maid who had succeeded in making her escape. She related how madame had returned from Guerdache at a little before midnight, and that all at once there had risen a sound of loud voices, and then the flames had broken out. The story was listened to and repeated in an undertone, and persons intimately acquainted with the household divined the cause of the terrible scene that had occurred. The maid was perfectly sure that monsieur and madame had perished in the flames. The general horror was intensified when Boisgelin arrived, and was observed to be so pale and unnerved that it was necessary to assist him in getting out of his carriage. He fainted away completely at the sight of this scene of ruin, where the wreck of his fortune lay smouldering before him, and where the bones of Delaveau and Fernande were falling into ashes. Dr. Novarre was obliged to devote himself to him.

Luc, in the mean time, was directing the final move-

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ments of the men, who were occupied in extinguishing the fire in the hall in which was located the steam-hammer, and which was still burning. Jordan, enveloped in wraps, insisted upon remaining, in spite of the great cold. Bonnaire, who had been one of the first to arrive, had distinguished himself by his courage in saving all that he could of the machinery and tools. Bourron and Fauchard, as well as all the old workmen from the Pit who had gone over to La Crêcherie, assisted him. They made every possible effort in the places that were so well known to them, and where they themselves had labored for so many years. But it seemed as though a malign destiny were taking the form of a hurricane, so that everything was carried off, swept away, and annihilated in spite of their efforts. Fire the avenger, fire the purifier, had just descended there like a thunderbolt, had swept the entire field, and cleared away the ruins with which the downfall of the old *régime* had obstructed it. Now the work was accomplished, the horizon was clear to an infinite distance, and it was possible for the city of justice and peace to allow the conquering tide to carry its houses up to the utmost extremity of the vast plain.

Lange, the potter and anarchist, was heard to say to the group in the midst of which he stood:

"No, no! I cannot claim the honor of doing it; it was not I who set it on fire; but no matter, for all that, it is a splendid work, and it is curious that the owners should have furthered it by roasting themselves."

He was speaking of the fire, and the general horror was so profound that no one forced him to be silent. The crowd went over to the side of victory. The authorities of Beauclair felicitated Luc on his devotion, and the shopkeepers and burghers surrounded the workmen from La Crêcherie, and ended by openly allying themselves with the latter. Lange was in the right; a broken-down society, smitten with madness, in tragic periods throws itself upon a funeral pyre. The dark melancholy works at the Pit, where the wages system had met its death blow, after its last hours of dishonored and accursed labor, consisted now

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of nothing but a few crumbling walls, supporting the frames of roofs, above which the lofty chimneys and the tower for tempering guns stood upright, useless and forlorn, under the dull gray sky.

Towards eleven o'clock that morning, just as the sun had decided to appear, Monsieur Jérôme passed by in his wheeled chair, pushed by a servant. He was taking his usual airing, and had just passed along the road to Combettes, skirting the works and the growing town of La Crêcherie, by this time bright with sunlight, gay and joyous. He now saw the field of defeat spread out before him, and the Pit sacked and destroyed by the justifiable violence of the flames. He gazed for a long time with his vacant and light-colored eyes, as limpid as spring-water. He uttered not a word; he made not a motion; he simply stared and passed on; and there was nothing to indicate whether or not he had seen and understood.

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BOOK III

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I

AT Guerdache the shock was terrible. This home of luxury and pleasure, the scene of continual *fêtes,* had been overtaken by ruin between one day and the next. A hunt must be countermanded, the large dinners given each Tuesday must be discontinued. The domestic force was to be dismissed in a body, and the sale of the carriages, horses, and kennels was already under discussion. The life and activity which the continual coming and going of visitors imparted to the gardens and the park had altogether ceased. All the apartments in the vast dwelling, the salons, the dining-room, the billiard-room, the smoking-room, were now nothing but deserts swept by the wind of misfortune. The place was like a dwelling struck by lightning, standing desolate amid the sudden solitude of calamity.

In the midst of this infinite sadness, Boisgelin dragged his melancholy presence up and down. Crushed and overwhelmed, with senses completely scattered, he passed the dreadful days, not knowing what to do with himself, and wandering to and fro like a soul in torment, amid the downfall of all his pleasures. He was only a poor creature at best, a man of clubs and horses, capable of nothing more than amiable mediocrity, whose fine presence, lofty and correct manner, and single eye-glass collapsed before the first tragic breath of truth and justice. Up to this time he had been occupied exclusively with pleasure, being convinced that this was his right. He had never done anything with his hands, and, believing as he did that he was a being set apart, chosen, privileged, and born only that he might be nourished and amused by the labor of others, how should he compre-

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and the natural sequence of the catastrophe that had overwhelmed him? His devout belief in his own egoism had received a rude shock, and he remained stunned before the future of the uncertainties of which he was ignorant. In his bewilderment he had the terror of an idle man, a man accustomed to be supported, who is agitated by reason of the incapacity to earn his own livelihood, of which he is conscious. Since Delaveau was no longer there, from whom could he exact the returns that had been promised him at the time when his cousin had influenced him to put his capital in the excellent speculation of the Pit? The works were burned, the capital was sunk under its ruins, and so where could he find the means of livelihood for to-morrow? He stalked like a madman through the deserted gardens and the melancholy house without finding an answer.

At first, on the night that the tragedy occurred, Boisgelin was haunted by the terrible end of Delaveau and Fernande. He himself could entertain no doubts in regard to it, since he remembered in what a distracted manner the latter had left him, uttering threats against her husband. It must certainly have been in consequence of some dreadful scene that Delaveau had himself set fire to the house, in order that he and the woman who was guilty might perish together. This, for a man like Boisgelin, displayed a ferocity and a fury of monstrous passions, the fear of which persistently spoiled his enjoyment. What completed his discouragement was the knowledge that he had not the judgment nor the energy necessary to introduce a little order into an affair so complicated and so compromising. He revolved projects from morning till evening, without knowing which to adopt. Ought he to re-establish the works, to try to find money, a partner, an engineer, with the hope of continuing the business? The success of this scheme seemed almost impossible, for the losses were considerable. Or would he do better to find a purchaser, who would, at his own risk, make use of the land, machinery, and material saved? But he was very doubtful whether

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such a purchaser could be found, and even more doubtful whether a price sufficiently large to clear the situation could be obtained from him. And even then there remained to be solved the problem of existence in the large domain of Guerdache, burdened with enormous expenses for its costly maintenance, where, at the end of a month, he would, perhaps, not have bread to eat.

There was but one person who had any pity on this wretched man, so shaken and forlorn, and that was his wife, Suzanne, that woman of heroic tenderness, whom he had so fearfully outraged. When Boisgelin first thrust upon her his *liaison* with Fernande, she had twenty times risen in the morning resolved upon making a scene in order to drive this mistress and interloper out of her house; but each time she had ended by remaining in her voluntary blindness, being sure that, if she drove away Fernande, her husband would follow her, so haunted and possessed was he. Then the abnormal situation regulated itself; she remained a lawful wife only in the eyes of the world, thus preserving appearances, and devoting herself entirely to the education of her son Paul, whom she wished to save from misfortune. Without this beautiful child, as fair and gentle as herself, she could never have become resigned. He was the real cause of her renunciation and of her sacrifice. She had, as it were, snatched away from the unworthy father a mind and heart that were her own, hers alone, where she could foster conscience and goodness and thus find her consolation. After this fashion the years had rolled away, in the quiet pleasure of seeing Paul develop in goodness and tenderness. She had assisted from a distance, so to speak, and without taking part in it, at the tragedy that had been enacted, at the slow ruin of the Pit in the face of the increasing prosperity of La Crêcherie, at the diseased craving for pleasure by which she was surrounded, and which in its madness had carried her own world into the abyss. A final insane transport had, at last, destroyed everything in one supreme blast of flame, and she also entertained no doubt that it was Dela-

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veau who had deliberately lighted this colossal funeral pile, in order that he might be consumed together with the guilty woman who had corrupted and destroyed everything. She herself did not escape the shadow of this crime. She asked herself whether she had not in some small degree been concerned in it, by her weakness and resignation, in tolerating for so long a time the shame and treachery that were concealed in her house. If she had risen in revolt in the beginning, perhaps the crime would not have reached such lengths. This struggle of her own conscience ended by completely upsetting her and causing her to have compassion for the wretched man, whom she had seen, ever since the catastrophe, walking distractedly, in his terrible confusion, through the deserted garden and the empty house.

Then one morning as she crossed the large salon, in which they had given so many *fêtes,* she saw him sunk in an arm-chair, and weeping with deep sobs like a child. She was very much moved, and filled with profound pity. She who for so many years had not addressed a word to him except in the presence of strangers, approached him.

"It is not in despair," said she to him, "that you will find the strength that you need."

Surprised at seeing her and hearing her speak to him, he looked at her confusedly amid his tears.

"Yes," she continued, "you may wander as much as you please, from morning till night, but courage must come from within yourself; you will not find it elsewhere."

He made a movement of desolation, and answered, in a low voice:

"I am so lonely."

He was not a bad man, only foolish and weak; one of those cowardly natures which are tyrannical by reason of egoistical enjoyment. He was sorrowing over the loneliness, grieving that his wife had left him in trouble, with an air so despondent that she was very much touched.

"You mean to say that you do not wish to be alone.

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Why, then, have you not come to me since these dreadful troubles began?"

"Great Heavens!" stammered he; "do you forgive me?"

He seized the hands that she surrendered to him; and in his complete self-abandonment acknowledged his sin in a frenzied desire for repentance. He confessed nothing but what she already knew—his prolonged deceit and treachery, his destruction of their domestic happiness, and his mad passion for that woman who had been his ruin; but he brought such an outburst of frankness to his self-accusation that she was touched by it, as though it were a new, complete avowal, the humiliation of which he might have avoided. He ended by saying:

"It is true, I have insulted you this long time, and have acted abominably. Why did you not leave me—why did you do nothing to tempt me to return?"

This touched then the tender spot in her conscience, the sad remorse that she felt at having, perhaps, failed in her duty by not arresting his downfall. And the reconciliation, begun in pity, was completed through this feeling of kindly indulgence. Have not the purest and most heroic spirits often their share in the sin to which the bad and the weak around them yield?

"Yes," said she, "I ought to have struggled more, but I wished to save my pride and to assure my own peace. We must both forget; the entire past must be buried."

Then, as their son Paul passed in the garden under the windows, she called him. He was now a tall boy of eighteen years, quick and intelligent, whom she had formed in her own likeness, with a tender heart and a strong conscience, entirely free from all class prejudices, and ready to work with his own hands whenever circumstances should require it. He was passionately fond of the soil. He spent entire days at the farm, interesting himself in all matters of its cultivation, in the seed that was sown and the harvests that sprang from it. When his mother called him to come to her for a minute

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he was about going to Feuillat's house to see a new style of plough.

"Come, my child," said she, "your father is in distress, and I want you to embrace him."

There had been a rupture between father and son as well as between husband and wife. The boy, taken possession of entirely by his mother, had grown up to show only a formal respect for the man whom he felt to be evil in nature and a torment to others. So, startled and moved, Paul looked for some seconds at his parents, who were so pale and so overcome with emotion. He understood, and after he had embraced his father very affectionately he threw himself upon his mother's neck in order to embrace her also with all his heart. The family were reunited, and there was a moment of happiness, when it seemed possible to believe that henceforward the good understanding would be perfect.

When Suzanne, in her turn, had embraced him, Boisgelin was forced to restrain a new outburst of tears.

"It is well, it is well; we are all united. Ah! my dears, this gives me courage. We are in so terrible a situation! It is necessary that we should understand one another and make some decision."

They all three sat down and talked for a little while, for speech was a necessity to Boisgelin after his solitary distracted wanderings in his agony of weakness. He thought it his duty to remind Suzanne how they had purchased the Pit for a million francs and Guerdache for five hundred thousand, using, in order to do this, the million of her dowry and the million saved from the ruin of his own fortune. The five hundred thousand francs which remained of the two millions, left in Delaveau's hands, had served as a fund for the running expenses of the works. All their capital, therefore, had been disposed of thus, and the worst part of it was that, during their recent embarrassments, it had been necessary to borrow six hundred thousand francs, a debt that heavily burdened the enterprise. The works could make no more money, now that they had been burned, and it would be

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necessary to pay the six hundred thousand francs before attempting to raise them from the ashes.

"Then what course are you going to adopt?" asked Suzanne.

He spoke of the two solutions between which he hesitated, without ability to choose, so many were the difficulties that each presented. The choice lay between getting rid of everything and selling all that was left of the Pit, at any price, so long as it supplied the means of paying the debt of six hundred thousand francs; or finding new capital by establishing a syndicate, in which his share would be the land and the machinery saved—a combination, however, that he felt to be chimerical. The solution of the difficulty became every day more pressing, for the ruin proved to be total and complete.

Suzanne remarked:

"We still have Guerdache; we can sell that."

"Oh! sell Guerdache!" answered he, with an air of desperation. "Sell this property where we are so happy, to which we are so habituated! To go in search of some place of refuge, and hide ourselves in some den of poverty! What a downfall! what a fresh and dreadful distress!"

She became grave again, perceiving clearly that he could not accustom himself to the idea of a quiet, commonplace existence.

"My dear, the same thing will be necessary if we stay here. We can no longer keep up so expensive an establishment."

"No doubt, no doubt, Guerdache will have to be sold, but later, when an opportunity presents itself. If we put it on the market now we shall not obtain half its value, for it will be an announcement of our ruin, and the whole country will understand it so, and will find occasion to rejoice and to speculate."

Then he made use of a more direct argument.

"Besides, dear love, Guerdache is your own. The title deeds state that the five hundred thousand francs purchase money were taken from the million in your dowry, and

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the other five hundred thousand are entered as half of the million which the Pit cost us. We were joint proprietors of the works, but Guerdache is your exclusive property, and my only wish is to keep it for you as long as we possibly can."

Suzanne made a sign, as though she did not wish to insist, but letting it be understood that she had been long resigned to any sacrifices. Her husband looked at her, and seemed suddenly to recollect something.

"Ah, tell me—I intended to ask you: do you ever see your old friend, Monsieur Luc Froment, nowadays?"

She remained stupefied for a moment. The breaking-off of her intercourse with Luc, in consequence of the bitter rivalry arising between the two sets of works, had not been the least of her griefs amid so many domestic troubles. In him she had lost a kind, cordial, comforting friend, who would have aided and supported her. But she had in this also resigned herself; she had met him since then at infrequent intervals, and wholly by chance on the rare occasions when she went out, and had never addressed a word to him. He himself had imitated her discretion and her renunciation, and it had seemed to him plain that their old intimacy was forever dead. All this did not prevent the young woman from taking a passionate interest in Luc's enterprise, which, however, she mentioned to no one. She continued to be secretly one with him in his generous effort and in his desire to establish a little justice and peace upon earth. Therefore she had suffered with him and triumphed with him, and when for the moment he had been thought dead under Ragu's knife she had shut herself up for two days, so that no one should see her. In the depths of her grief she was conscious of an intolerable agony at the thought of his affection for Josine, of which she then learned, and which left a wound in her heart. Had she, then, been in love with Luc without knowing it? Had she not dreamed of the joy and pride of a husband such as he, one who would have made so magnificent a use of his fortune? Had she not said to herself

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how she would have aided him, how they would together have realized miracles of peace and goodness? But he had recovered, and was now the husband of Josine, and she had again withdrawn into the shade in her abnegation as a deserted wife, as a mother who lived only for her son. Luc had ceased to exist for her, and the question put to her in regard to him brought him back to her from so far off that she did not conceal her great surprise as she replied:

"How do you think that I could see Monsieur Froment? You are well aware that it is more than ten years since our relations with him were broken."

Boisgelin shrugged his shoulders calmly.

"Oh, that need not prevent it; you might have met him somewhere and talked with him. You understood each other so well in old times. You have kept up no intercourse with him, then?"

"No," said she, distinctly. "If I still met him, you would have known it."

She felt her own astonishment increase, wounded as she was at his insistence and a little mortified at being interrogated after this fashion. What was he aiming at? What was the reason of this desire that she should have kept up relations with Luc? She began to seek information in her turn.

"Why do you ask me this?"

"For no definite reason, only a passing idea that came to me a little while ago."

He returned to it, however, and ended by confessing.

"I said to you, you remember, that we had two courses open to us: either to sell the Pit and get rid of everything, or to establish a business firm, in which I should remain. But there is still a third course, a combination of the two others, which would be to get La Crêcherie to buy the Pit, reserving to ourselves the best part of the profits. Do you understand?"

"No, not at all."

"Nevertheless, it is very simple. This Luc must have an intense desire to possess our property. Now he has

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done us a great deal of harm, has he not? It is only fair that we should extract a large sum from him. And this would be our salvation; above all, if we had an interest in the house besides, it would permit us to keep Guerdache without diminishing our establishment in the least."

Suzanne listened to him with a feeling of great sadness. She perceived that he was still the same man, and that the dreadful lesson that he had just received had not reformed him. His only idea was to speculate upon others, and extract profit for himself out of any situation wherever it might be found. Above all, his one aim was to do nothing himself, and to remain in idleness as the sleeping-partner, the capitalist that he now was. In the midst of the overwhelming despair that had oppressed him ever since the catastrophe, he preserved nothing but the terror of and hatred for work. His absorbing thought was how to arrange matters so that he could continue to live without doing anything. And his pleasure in this prospect reappeared suddenly from beneath his already dried tears.

Wishing to understand the matter thoroughly, Suzanne said: "But what have I to do with the affair? Why do you ask me whether I have preserved relations with Monsieur Froment?"

He answered, coolly:

"Oh, well, because that would have facilitated the overtures that I am thinking of making to him. You can understand that after years of misunderstanding it is not easy to approach a gentleman in order to introduce a question of one's own interest, while it would become simpler if the gentleman had remained your friend. You yourself, perhaps, could have seen him and spoken to him—"

She stopped him with a sudden gesture.

"I should never have spoken to Monsieur Froment under such circumstances. You forget that I had a sisterly affection for him."

The unfortunate man had stooped to the baseness of

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speculating upon the tenderness which Luc might have kept in his heart, and it was this that he had thought of employing in order to move his adversary, so as to conquer him the more easily.

He must have known that he was paining her, for he saw her suddenly turn paler and colder, as if she had again withdrawn from him. So, wishing to efface the bad impression, he said:

"You are right; these things do not concern women. You could not, of course, undertake such a commission; but, nevertheless, I am pleased with my idea, since the more I reflect upon it the more I am convinced that our salvation is there. I am going to arrange my plan of attack, and then I shall do my best to find a means of placing myself in communication with the manager of La Crêcherie — unless, indeed, I let him take the first step himself, which would be shrewder."

He was cheered up by this hope of duping another, and of thereby securing his own enjoyment, as he had always done. Life was still worth living, if one could live with his hands white and idle, ignorant of the use of tools. He rose with a sigh of relief, and looked out of one of the windows at the great park, which seemed more spacious than ever, on this clear winter day, and where he hoped, as soon as spring came, to resume his *fêtes*. Then he exclaimed:

"We should be very stupid to distress ourselves unduly. Can people like ourselves ever be wretched?"

Suzanne, who had remained seated, felt her horrible sadness increase. A moment before she had entertained the ingenuous hope of reforming this man, but now perceived that all the tempests in the world and revolutions themselves might pass over him without his amending and without his even comprehending the new times. The primitive exploitation of man by man was in his blood, and he could live and enjoy himself only upon others. He would always remain a big, bad child, whom she would eventually have the charge of, if justice ever did its work. Then she had no longer

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any other feeling towards him than a great deal of cold pity.

During this long conversation Paul had not moved, but had listened to his parents with an air of intelligence and tenderness. All the emotions that agitated his mother could be seen reflected in his large, thoughtful eyes. He was in complete communion with her, and suffered whatever she suffered upon seeing the unworthiness of the husband and father. And when she noticed his painful constraint, she asked him:

"Where were you going, my child?"

"Mother, I was going to the farm, where Feuillat must, by this time, have received the new plough for winter tillage."

Boisgelin laughed outright.

"And does that interest you?"

"Why, certainly, my father. At Combettes they have steam-ploughs that make furrows more than a mile long in their fields, which have been united in common so as to form one immense field. It is wonderful to see the earth turned over and fertilized down to its inwards."

He was becoming enthusiastic with the vehemence of a child. His mother smiled tenderly.

"Go, go, my child," she said; "go and see the new plough, and work yourself; you will be the better for it."

During the days that followed Suzanne observed that her husband was in no haste to put his project into execution. He seemed to be satisfied to have found the solution, which, according to him, was going to save them all; and his indolence and feebleness of will took possession of him once more. There was also now at Guerdache another grown-up child, whose conduct caused her a sudden uneasiness. Monsieur Jérôme, her grandfather, who had just reached the advanced age of eighty-eight years, in spite of the species of living death with which paralysis had stricken him, had always led his silent life apart, having no longer any relations with the outside world, except during his continual airings in his wheeled chair, pushed by his servant. Suzanne alone entered his

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room, and cared for him with the tender attentions that she had bestowed upon him, nearly thirty years before, when she was a little girl, in that same room upon the ground floor opening upon the park. She had become so accustomed to the clear eyes of the old man, those fathomless eyes, like the depths of spring water, that she could read therein the slightest and most fugitive emotions. Now, since the recent events, the eyes had become darker, and it seemed as though their waters had been troubled by some sediment disturbed in their depths. During many monotonous years she had bent over them, without seeing anything in them, and she had asked herself whether they could remain so pure, so vacant, if the power of thought were not gone from them forever. Was it possible that thought was now returning? Might not these shadows, these growing disquietudes, indicate a possible revival of all his powers? Was it possible that he had always been conscious and intelligent; or had the hard physical pressure of the paralysis relaxed, as it were, by a miracle, freeing him for a moment, at the last, from the silence and immobility in which he had so long lived imprisoned. She watched this slow work of deliverance with surprise and increasing distress.

One evening the servant who pushed Monsieur Jérôme's wheeled chair ventured to stop Suzanne as she came out of the old man's room, induced to do so by the look of intelligence with which he had followed her to the door.

"Madame," he said, "I made up my mind that I would tell you. It seems to me that monsieur is more himself. He has spoken to-day."

Suzanne exclaimed, in great astonishment:

"What! he has spoken?"

"Yes. I was almost sure yesterday that I heard him stammer a few words, in a low voice, during a little halt that we made on the Brias road opposite the Pit. But to-day, as we were passing La Crêcherie, he certainly spoke. I am sure of it."

"And what did he say?"

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"Ah, madame, I did not clearly understand, but I am almost sure that the words were incoherent, and had no reasonable meaning."

From that time on Suzanne watched over her grandfather with anxious tenderness. His servant had orders to come every evening and relate the events of the day to madame, and it was thus that she was able to follow the increasing uneasiness that seemed to be taking possession of the aged man. He was becoming possessed of a craving to see and hear, and insisted that his drives should be extended, as if he were greedy of the sights spread out along the roads. But, above all, he caused himself to be taken daily to one of two places, either the Pit or La Crêcherie, and remained for hours gazing fixedly at the gloomy ruins of the one or the cheerful prosperity of the other. He insisted that his servant should walk more slowly, and on several occasions ordered him to go back over the road, stammering more and more distinctly the incoherent words, which were still devoid of meaning. At last, Suzanne, disturbed by this slow revival, sent for Dr. Novarre, being desirous to have his opinion.

"Doctor," said she, after having explained the case to him, "I feel as though I were assisting at a resurrection. My heart is deeply touched by it, and it seems to me that I see therein a wonderful sign, which foretells extraordinary events."

Novarre smiled at this instance of feminine nervousness. Then he wished to investigate for himself. But Monsieur Jérôme was not an accommodating patient. He had closed his doors to doctors, as well as to every one else; and as his condition required no treatment, the doctor had abstained from going to see him for some years. He was, therefore, obliged to content himself with waiting for him in the park, on one of his outings, when he greeted him and followed him along the road. But even as he approached he saw Monsieur Jérôme's eyes light up, and his lips move in a confused stammering. The doctor was astonished and touched in his turn.

"You are right, madame," said he, upon his return

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to Suzanne; "the case is very unusual. There is clearly every evidence of a crisis of the whole system, which must proceed from a profound internal shock."

She asked, anxiously:

"But what do you foresee, doctor, and what can we do?"

"Oh, we can do nothing; that, unfortunately, is certain. And as to foreseeing what such a state is likely to lead to in the near future, I would not even venture to predict. Still, I must admit that although such cases are rare, there are examples of them. For instance, I remember myself examining, at the Asylum of Saint-Cron, an old man who had been shut up there for nearly forty years without having ever been heard to utter a word, so far as the attendants could recall. All at once he seemed to awaken. He spoke confusedly at first, then very distinctly, and kept up for entire hours an interminable flow of uninterrupted prattle. But the extraordinary thing was that this old man, who had been considered idiotic, had seen everything, heard everything, and understood everything during his forty years of apparent stupor; and what he recounted, in his ceaseless flow of words, was precisely the interminable recital of his sensations and his recollections that had been locked up within him since he first came to the asylum."

Suzanne shuddered, and tried to conceal the extreme emotion that this terrible example caused her.

"And what became of this unfortunate?" asked she again.

Novarre hesitated for a moment.

"He died three days later. I must admit to you, madame, that these sorts of crises are almost always the symptom of an approaching end. It is the eternal simile of the lamp that emits a final burst of light before it goes out forever."

A deep silence prevailed. Suzanne had become very pale as she felt the shadow of death pass by. But it was not her unfortunate grandfather's approaching end that touched her most deeply; she had another dread, another

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grief. Was it possible that her grandfather, like the old man at Saint-Cron, had seen, heard, and comprehended everything? She felt that she must venture to ask one more question.

"Do you believe, doctor," she asked, "that intelligence has been abolished in our own dear invalid? Could he, in your opinion, understand and think?"

Novarre made a vague gesture, that of a scientific man who considers himself unable to vouch for anything outside of experimental certainty.

"Oh, madame," replied he, "you are asking too much of me. In the mysteries of the brain, into which we as yet penetrate with such difficulty, all things are possible. Intelligence may remain intact after the loss of speech, for the fact that a person does not speak does not imply that he is incapable of thought. Still, my diagnosis would have been that all the mental faculties of Monsieur Jérôme were enfeebled. I have believed him sunk completely into senile infancy."

"But it is possible, you say, that he may have kept his faculties intact?"

"It is very possible; I even begin to suspect that that has been the case, and the demonstration of it lies in the awakening of his whole being, with the power of speech that seems to be returning to him by degrees."

The result of this conversation was to leave Suzanne in a kind of melancholy horror. She could no longer linger affectionately in her grandfather's room, assisting thus at his resurrection, without feeling a secret terror. If he had really seen all, heard all, understood all, in the dumb rigidity by which the paralysis held him, then what a terrible tragedy had he passed through in the depths of his silence! For more than thirty years he had been the impassive witness of the rapid decay of his race; his wide-open eyes had beheld the defeat of his descendants gradually accomplished, and had seen their downfall accelerated by the vertigo of possession transmitted from father to son. He had seen his son Michel, after the death of his wife, ruin himself in the pursuit of other

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women, and blow out his brains with a pistol; his daughter Laure, mad with religious feeling, had entered a convent; and his son Philippe, married to a worthless wretch, had been killed in a duel, at the close of an imbecile existence. He had seen his grandson Gustave, the son of Michel, become the cause of his father's suicide by robbing him of his mistress and of a hundred thousand francs from his business payments at the very time that his other grandson, André, the son of Philippe, sank into imbecility in the confinement of an asylum. He had seen Boisgelin, the husband of his granddaughter, Suzanne, buy in the endangered Pit, put it in the hands of his poor cousin, Delaveau, who, after giving it a brief prosperity, had just reduced it, when it was on the verge of bankruptcy, to ashes, on the very night that he discovered the destroying poison, the treachery of his wife Fernande and the fine gentleman Boisgelin, who were the ruin of each other in a mad desire for luxury and pleasure, even to the point of destruction of everything that surrounded them. He had seen the Pit, his own beloved creation, those works that he had received in a very modest form from his father, and which he had enlarged by the work of his own hands until they had become gigantic—he had seen the Pit, which he hoped his own descendants would convert into an entire town, an empire of iron and steel, decline so rapidly that now, in the second generation, there was not a stone of it left standing. And, lastly, he had seen his race, in which had accumulated so slowly, from a long line of laborers, the creative force that displayed itself in his father and himself, all at once spoiled, degenerated, destroyed by the abuse of riches, so that no spark remained, among his grandchildren, of the heroism of labor belonging to the Qurignons. What a dreadful history was accumulated in the brain of this old man of eighty-eight years!—what a course of terrible events, covering an entire century of effort, lighting up the past, the present, and the future of a family! And what a frightful thing it was that the brain, where this history had apparently been

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sleeping, should slowly awake and threaten shortly to pour out the whole in a flood of unrestrained frankness, if the lips now only stammering should begin to enunciate intelligible words!

It was this terrible awakening that Suzanne now expected with increasing anxiety. She and her son were the last of the race. Paul was the only male descendant of the Qurignons left. His aunt Laure had just died in the convent of Carmelite nuns, where she had lived for forty years, and some years since the cousin André, secluded from his infancy, had died insane. When Paul now accompanied his mother to Monsieur Jérôme's room, the latter looked at him for a long time with those eyes which now displayed intelligence. Paul was the single fragile twig of that oak, with its powerful trunk, which he had formerly hoped to see increase and divide into vigorous branches representing a numerous family. Would not this boy bring to the family tree new strength, health, and vigor drawn from his rough, laboring ancestors? Was not his posterity going, in the future, to spread and extend so as to conquer all the blessings and all the joys of earth? But such vigor was already exhausted among his grandsons; the life of wealth, ill spent, had exhausted the ancestral strength, accumulated so far back, in less than half a century. How sad was the spectacle of the grandfather, the last remaining witness upright amid so many ruins, seeing no one now to succeed him but the gentle Paul, so refined and so delicate, this precious offshoot, the last gift that life seemed to have been willing to leave to the Qurignons, in order that they might take fresh root and blossom once more in a new soil. How sad was the irony of this quiet, thoughtful child, being now alone in this enormous Guerdache, this royal habitation bought formerly at a great price by Monsieur Jérôme, in the hope and proud expectation of one day filling it with his numerous descendants. He had imagined these vast apartments occupied by ten establishments; he had heard there the laughter of a continually increasing troop of boys and girls; it was to be the heredi-

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tary domain, happy and luxurious, where the Qurignon dynasty, more and more numerous, should reign. But, behold, on the contrary, these apartments became each day more vacant. Intoxication, madness, and death had passed by, each doing its destructive work, until finally a temptress had appeared who had completed the ruin of the house; and now, since the last catastrophe, two-thirds of the apartments were closed, the whole of the second story was abandoned to dust, the reception-rooms themselves on the ground floor were opened only on Saturday to permit the sun to enter. Unless Paul could restore the race, it was going to become extinct, and the empire where it should have prospered was nothing more than a vast empty territory, too heavy for the shoulders of the disunited family, and destined to crumble little by little into decay, unless a new life was breathed into it.

Another week passed by. The servant could now distinguish words in the confused stammerings of Monsieur Jérôme. Then a distinct sentence was formed, and he came to repeat it to madame.

"Oh, it was not without difficulty, madame, but I can assure you positively that monsieur repeated again this morning, 'It is necessary to give back, it is necessary to give back!'"

Suzanne remained incredulous. This did not convey to her any idea. "It is necessary to give back, what? Listen again, my friend," said she; "try to catch the words better."

The next day the servant was still more positive.

"I assure you, madame, that monsieur says distinctly, 'It is necessary to give back, it is necessary to give back,' twenty or thirty times running, in a low, continuous voice, as if he were putting into the words all the strength that remains in him."

From that evening Suzanne resolved to watch over her grandfather herself, in order to make her own observations. The next day he could not rise. His brain remained free, but his lower limbs, and soon his whole body, were attacked by the disease, as if already struck by

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death. She became frightened, and sent once more for Dr. Novarre, who could do nothing, and who warned her gently that the end was near. From that time forward she did not leave the room.

It was a vast apartment, covered with a thick carpet, and hung with very heavy tapestry. Its coloring was red, and the whole effect was of solid but slightly sombre luxury. The furniture was of sculptured mahogany. There was a large bed with posts, and a long mirror in which the whole park was reflected. When the windows were open, an immense expanse of horizon could be seen beyond the lawns, and through the tops of the trees, some of which were a hundred years old; the collection of roofs belonging to Beauclair were visible, then the Monts Bleuses in the distance, La Crêcherie with its blast-furnace, and the Pit, whose gigantic chimneys were still standing.

One morning Suzanne had seated herself near the bed, after having drawn back the curtains, in order that the winter sun might enter, when she was greatly moved by hearing Monsieur Jérôme speak. His face was turned towards the window, and for a moment he looked at the distant horizon with his large, clear eyes. At first he said only two words:

"Monsieur Luc—"

Suzanne, who had heard distinctly, remained for a moment filled with surprise. Why Monsieur Luc? Monsieur Jérôme had never had any relations with Luc; he must be in ignorance even of the latter's existence, unless, indeed, he had been conscious of recent events, and had seen and understood everything, which was what she had suspected and feared for some time past. This "Monsieur Luc," falling from lips so long sealed, was the first evidence that there had always been an active intelligence which perceived and understood behind his silence. She felt her own distress increase.

"Is it really Monsieur Luc that you said, grandfather?"

"Yes, yes, Monsieur Luc."

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He displayed a clearness and an increasing energy, while his eyes were ardently fixed on her.

"Why do you speak to me of Monsieur Luc?" said she. "You know him, then; you have something to tell me about him?"

He hesitated, not finding words with certainty, and then he repeated Luc's name, with the impatience of a child.

"He was formerly my great friend," said she, "but he has not come here for many long years."

Monsieur Jérôme shook his head violently, and then he collected himself, as if his tongue were becoming gradually loosened.

"I know, I know—I want him to come."

"You want Monsieur Luc to come and see you? You wish to speak to him, grandfather?"

"Yes, yes, that is it. Let him come at once; I will speak to him."

Suzanne's surprise increased, together with the secret dread that now took possession of her. What could Monsieur Jérôme wish to say to Luc? The idea seemed to her so full of painful possibilities that for a moment she tried to disbelieve in the desire, seeing in it only a delirious imagination. But he was in full possession of his senses, and entreated her with an emotion irresistibly full of power, in which he exhausted the last strength of his poor, infirm being. She ended by being greatly troubled, suspecting a case of conscience, and asking herself whether she would not be to blame in refusing a dying man such an interview, even though obscure and difficult complications might arise from it, concerning which she was already in dread.

"You cannot tell me, grandfather?"

"No, no—to Monsieur Luc. I will tell him immediately—oh! immediately."

"Very well, grandfather, I am going to write to him, and I hope he will come."

But when Suzanne wrote that letter to Luc her hand trembled. She could trace only two lines: "My friend,

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I am in need of you. Come at once." After two attempts she was obliged to stop; strength failed her to reach the end of even these few words, so strongly did they arouse in her memories of her own wasted life, and of the happiness which had passed her by, and which she would never know. It was scarcely ten o'clock in the morning when a servant set out with the letter, in order to carry it to La Crêcherie.

Luc was standing before the Communal House, having just finished his morning inspection, when the letter was brought to him, and he followed the servant without delay. But what emotion, what heartfelt distress did he not also feel at these simple and touching words: "My friend, I am in need of you. Come at once." It was now twelve years since events had separated them, and she wrote to him as if they had parted the evening before, so certain was she of seeing him respond to her appeal. She had not doubted her friend for an instant, and he was touched to tears at feeling her to be always the same as in their good-fellowship of former times. The most dreadful tragedies had been enacted around them, all the passions had been unchained, sweeping away men and things, and yet they found themselves again hand in hand, after so many years' separation. Then, as with a quick step he was approaching Guerdache, he asked himself why she had called him? He was not in ignorance of Boisgelin's desire to sell him the Pit as dearly as possible, in order to speculate upon the situation. Moreover, his resolution was taken; he would not buy the Pit, for the only acceptable solution was that the Pit should enter into the association of La Crêcherie, as other works of less importance had already done. The idea came to him for a moment that Boisgelin had obliged his wife to make overtures to him. But he knew her; she was incapable of lending herself to such a rôle. He imagined her, then, distracted with uneasiness and having need of him under some tragic circumstances. He sought no further; she would tell him herself the service that she claimed from his affection.

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Suzanne was awaiting Luc in a little salon, and, when he entered, she felt as though she should faint, so profound was her distress. He himself was very much overcome, and his heart was overflowing. At first he could not utter a word, and they looked at each other in silence.

"Oh, my friend, my friend," murmured she, at last.

She put into these simple words the emotion of all that had passed during the twelve years of their separation, which had only been broken by rare and silent meetings: the cruel life that she had led at her insulted and desecrated fireside, and, above all, the work that he had accomplished during this time, and which she had followed from afar with an enthusiastic soul. He had become a hero, and she worshipped him; she would have liked to kneel to him, to pour balm into his wounds, to be the companion who should console and aid him. But another had come; she had suffered so much on account of Josine that her heart was henceforth dead, buried in that love unknown to all, of whose existence she herself no longer wished to be aware. The sight of her divinity, now before her, revived all these things from the secret depths of her being, and produced a tender distraction that moistened her eyes and agitated her hands in a faint trembling.

"Oh, my friend, my friend! You are here, then! It was necessary only for me to call you!"

With Luc, who was moved by a like sympathy, remembrance evoked the entire past as well. He had known her to be so unhappy, under the insult of seeing Fernande, the temptress, almost installed in her house. He had known her to be so dignified, so heroic, unwilling to yield her proper place, and defending the honor of her name by remaining in her own home, and holding up her head for her son's sake and her own. Moreover, in spite of the separation, she had never lost her head nor her self-control; he had respected and pitied her more at each new grief by which he knew her to be smitten. He had very often asked himself how he could go to her assistance and in what manner he could aid her. He would

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have experienced so lively a joy at giving her some proof that he had forgotten nothing, that he had remained the friend of former times, the discreet accomplice of her good actions! This was why he responded so quickly to her first appeal, full of that uneasy affection that now, when he was before her, swelled his heart and rendered him incapable of speech, until at last he was able to reply:

"Yes, your friend, your friend, who has never ceased to be so, who only awaited such a summons in order to hasten to you."

They had remained on terms of brother and sister, and they felt that intimacy of feeling so profoundly that they fell into each other's arms. They kissed each other upon the cheek, like comrades and friends, no longer afraid of human follies, secure of never suffering through each other, each sure of finding nothing but peace and courage in the other. All the strength and tenderness that can exist in the friendship of a man and a woman blossomed forth in the smile that they exchanged.

"My friend," said Luc, "if you only knew my anxiety when I perceived that the Pit would finally crumble to pieces under my attacks! Is it not you whom I have ruined? What faith in my mission have I not been obliged to obey, in order not to be hindered by this thought! Sometimes I have been overcome with great depression at the thought that you would curse me, and that you would never pardon me for being the cause of all the anxiety that must have been oppressing you at that hour."

"I curse you, my friend! But I was with you; I said prayers for you; your victories have been my only joy! And then it was so delightful to me to have a secret affection for you in the midst of my world, which was execrating you, and to understand you and to love you, in an inner sanctuary, unknown to others."

"I have none the less ruined you, my friend. What is going to become of you, accustomed as you are from infancy to a life of luxury?"

"Oh, as to ruin, my friend, that would have occurred

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without you. It is others who have ruined me. And you will see how brave I shall be, weak as you consider me."

"But Paul—but your son?"

"Paul?—no greater good-fortune could have befallen him. He will work. Look at what money has done for my people."

Then Suzanne at length told Luc why she had addressed to him so urgent a summons. Monsieur Jérôme, whose painful awakening to consciousness she related to him, desired to see him. Dr. Novarre believed the end to be near, and it was the wish of a dying man. Luc, astonished like herself, and like herself inspired with an undefined dread at the thought of this resurrection, which he was so strangely summoned to witness, answered that he was entirely at her service and ready to do whatever she asked of him.

"Have you informed your husband of this desire, and of my visit?" asked he.

She looked at him, with a slight elevation of her shoulders.

"No," answered she, "I have not thought of doing so; it is useless. For a long time my grandfather has not even seemed to be aware that my husband existed. He does not speak to him, and does not see him. Moreover, my husband went out hunting this morning, and has not yet returned."

Then she added:

"If you will be kind enough to follow me, I will take you at once."

When they entered Monsieur Jérôme's room, the latter was sitting up in the wide mahogany bed, supported by pillows; he still had his head turned towards the window, the curtains of which had remained wide open. He must never have withdrawn his eyes from the magnificent park and the extent of the horizon, with the Pit and La Crêcherie down below on the side of the Monts Bleuses and above the crowded roofs of Beauclair. It was a view that seemed to haunt him, a continual evocation of the

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past, the present, and the future, belonging to the long years during which, in his silence, he had had this outlook unceasingly before him.

"Grandfather," said Suzanne, "I bring you Monsieur Luc Froment. Here he is; he has done us the kindness to come immediately."

The aged man turned his head slowly, and fastened upon Luc his large eyes, which seemed larger than ever, and of a profound and infinite clearness. He said nothing, not even a word of welcome and acknowledgment. The deep silence continued several minutes without his gaze being diverted from this unknown figure, this founder of La Crêcherie, as if he had the wish to understand him well and to penetrate with his dying eyes into the depths of his soul.

Suzanne, a little embarrassed, resumed:

"Grandfather, you do not know Monsieur Froment; or have you, perhaps, remarked him in your outings?"

He did not appear to understand his granddaughter, and made no further answer to her. But at the end of a moment he turned his head once more and searched the room with his eyes. Not finding what he wanted, he ended by pronouncing a single word, a name—

"Boisgelin."

This, to Suzanne, was a fresh surprise, mixed with anxiety and embarrassment.

"You are asking for my husband, grandfather; do you wish him to be here?"

"Yes, yes—Boisgelin."

"He has not come back, I think. In the mean time, you ought to tell Monsieur Froment why you have wished to see him."

"No, no. Boisgelin, Boisgelin."

It was plain that he could speak only before Boisgelin. Suzanne, after having excused herself to Luc, left the room to seek her husband. Luc remained face to face with Monsieur Jérôme, and felt that gaze of infinite penetration always on his person. He himself began to examine in his turn, and found Monsieur Jérôme of ex-

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traordinary beauty, in his extreme old age, with his white face and his regular features, to which the approach of death, ennobled by a great act, imparted a sovereign majesty. The period of waiting was long, and not a word was exchanged between the two men, who searched each other with their eyes. The room about them, with its heavy hangings and massive furniture, seemed to sleep under the oppression of its weighty luxury. Not a sound, not a breath, nothing but the rustle that came across the walls from the emptiness of the great closed salons and of entire floors abandoned to dust. Nothing could be more tragic or more solemn than this delay.

At last Suzanne reappeared, bringing Boisgelin, who had just returned. He was still in his hunting dress, gaitered and gloved, for she had not given him time to put on a house costume. He entered with an air of anxiety, confused at stumbling on such an adventure. What his wife had just told him, of Luc summoned by Monsieur Jérôme, Luc in his house, in the room of the old man, who was restored to consciousness, and who was waiting to speak to him, all these unforeseen events upset him, and threw him into extreme distress, without his having even a few minutes for reflection.

"Grandfather," said Suzanne, "here is my husband. Speak, if you have something to say to us. We are listening to you."

But the old man once more looked around the room, and, not finding what he wanted, asked again:

"Paul; where is Paul?"

"You wish that Paul also should be here?"

"Yes, yes; I wish it."

"Paul must be at the farm. To send for him will require a good quarter of an hour."

"It is necessary; I wish it, I wish it."

They yielded and sent a servant in haste. This time the delay was yet more solemn and tragic. Luc and Boisgelin had simply bowed, without finding a word to say to each other, after so many years, in that room which was already filled by an august presence. No one

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spoke, nothing was heard stirring in the air but the slightly heavy breathing of Monsieur Jérôme. His wide-open eyes, full of light, were once more turned towards the window—towards that horizon of human effort in labor where the past had been revolutionized and where the future was about to be born. The minutes passed by, slow and regular, in that anxious expectation of what was about to come, of that act of supreme importance, the approach of which was felt.

There was the sound of a light step. Paul entered, with a healthy, rosy face reddened by the open air.

"My child," said Suzanne, "it is your grandfather who has called us together, and who desires to speak only before you."

On the lips of Monsieur Jérôme, so long rigid, a smile of infinite tenderness appeared. He summoned Paul by a gesture, and made him sit down as near him as possible, on the side of the bed. It was for him, above all, that he wished to speak—for this last of the Qurignons, by whom the race might be rejuvenated and still bear good fruits. When he saw that Paul was very much moved and that his heart was torn by this last farewell, he delayed a moment to reassure him, with his tender, grandfatherly eyes, which seemed to say that death was sweet, since he was going to bequeath to his great-grandson the inheritance of his long existence, an act of goodness, justice, and peace.

Then, at last, he spoke, in the silence religiously preserved by all. He had turned his head towards Boisgelin, and repeated, at first, the isolated words which the servant had heard him stammer, in a low voice, two days before, in the midst of other confused utterances.

"It is necessary to give back; it is necessary to give back."

And seeing that they did not fully understand what he wished to say, he turned again to Paul, and repeated, with much strength:

"It is necessary to give back; it is necessary to give back."

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Suzanne, moved by a sudden chill that passed over her, had exchanged glances with Luc, who also was shuddering; and while Boisgelin, struck with uneasiness and dread, was affecting to await some senile rambling utterance, she inquired:

"What do you mean to say to us, grandfather, and what is it necessary that we should give back?"

Monsieur Jérôme's voice made itself more and more distinct and free.

"Everything, my daughter. Down yonder it is necessary to give back the Pit. Here it is necessary to give back Guerdache. At the farm, it is necessary to give back the land. It is necessary to give back everything, because nothing ought to belong to us, because everything ought to belong to all."

"But, grandfather, explain yourself; to whom, then, must it be restored?"

"I am telling you, my daughter. Restitution must be made to all. Nothing of that which we have believed to be our wealth is ours. If this wealth has poisoned us and destroyed us, it is because it was the wealth of others. For our own happiness, for the happiness of others, it is necessary to give back; it is necessary to give back."

It was a scene of sovereign beauty, of incomparable grandeur. Monsieur Jérôme did not always find words, but he completed his thoughts by gestures. In the midst of the silence which those who listened sacredly preserved, he slowly and in spite of obstacles succeeded in making them understand. He had seen everything, heard everything, and understood everything; and, as Suzanne had foreseen with an agonizing dread, it was the entire past that now appeared in his words, all the truth of the terrible past which poured forth in an overwhelming flood, from this witness so long mute and impassive, incarcerated in his human prison. He seemed to have outlived the innumerable disasters that had overtaken a once happy family overwhelmed by ruin, only to draw from his experience a great example. Now in his day of awakening, before death overtook him, he was detailing his

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long sufferings as a man who, after having believed in his race, and having seen it established in the position of authority won by himself, had lived long enough to perceive the race and the authority swept away by the wind of the future. And he was explaining why, he was sitting in judgment, and was making reparation.

There had been in the beginning the first Qurignon, the working forgeman who created the Pit, with some comrades as poor as himself, but no doubt less dexterous and economical. Then there was himself, the second Qurignon, who gained the fortune, the accumulated millions, by an obstinate struggle, in which he showed himself a hero of determination, of constant and intelligent effort. But although he had accomplished prodigies of activity and of creative genius, and had gained money by an honorable appreciation of the conditions of production and sale, he understood perfectly that he was simply an originator, and that his strength and his success were the result of long generations of working-men culminating in him. What numbers of peasants sweating in the field, of workmen exhausted by mechanical labor, had been necessary in order to produce the two first Qurignons, the conquerors of the fortune? In them had been amassed the hard necessity for effort, for self-enrichment, for social ascent, the slow enfranchisement of the miserable slave oppressed by the labor of servitude. And, finally, there was produced a Qurignon who was sufficiently strong to vanquish all obstacles and to escape from captivity, to acquire the longed-for wealth, to be, in his turn, a rich man and a master. And then, immediately afterwards, in two generations, the race had degenerated, had fallen behind in the melancholy contest, already enfeebled by pleasure and consumed by it as though by flames.

"It is necessary to give back; it is necessary to give back; it is necessary to give back."

There was his son Michel, who, after his period of madness, destroyed himself the day before his payments fell due. There was his other son, Philippe, who married a

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good-for-nothing woman, and, ruined by her, lost his life in an idiotic duel. There was his daughter Laure, her brain enfeebled by mystic visions, dying later, unmarried, in a convent. There were his two grandsons, André, the son of Philippe, rachitic and semi-insane, wasting his existence in an asylum, and Gustave, the son of Michel, meeting a tragic end on the road to Italy, after having driven his father to suicide by robbing him of his mistress and of the money for his month's payments. Lastly, there was his granddaughter, Suzanne, the tender, the good, and the well-beloved, whose husband, Boisgelin, after having bought back the Pit and Guerdache, had completed their destruction. The Pit was in ashes, still hot from the destroying fire, the avenger of folly and pollution. Guerdache, where he had hoped to see his race increase, surrounded him like a desert, with its empty rooms and its gloomy park, across which passed nothing except the pale phantom of the murderess, the temptress, of that Fernande whose ruin had just been consummated. And while the different members of his race thus succumbed, one after the other, unsettling and sweeping away the work of his father and himself, he had seen a new enterprise established opposite—La Crêcherie—where everything was now prospering, the living witness of the future that it was introducing. He was aware of these things, because they had passed before his wide-open eyes in the course of his continual airings and his hours of mute contemplation, when he was waiting before the Pit at the moment when the workmen came out, or before La Crêcherie, where the older workmen, deserters from the Pit, still saluted him, and again before the Pit on the morning when there remained nothing of this beloved establishment but smoking ruins.

"It is necessary to give back; it is necessary to give back."

This cry, to which he constantly gave vent, in the midst of his slow flow of words, and which he emphasized every time with more energy, arose as the necessary consequence of the disastrous occurrences from which he

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had so much suffered. If the things around him had crumbled away so rapidly, was it not because the fortune acquired by the labor of others was corrupted and corrupting? The kind of pleasure that it procures is the most certain of destructive ferments; it debases the race, disorganizes the family, and brings about abominable tragedies. It was this that in less than half a century had devoured that strength, that intelligence, and that genius which had been laid up in reserve among the Qurignons during centuries of hard labor. The error of these stalwart workmen had been to believe that they had the right, for their personal happiness, to take possession of and enjoy the wealth that they were creating through the hands of their comrades. But the wealth dreamed of, the wealth accumulated, had resulted in a punishment. Nothing affords a worse moral example than the spectacle of the working-man who, having gained wealth and become a master, is the ruler of thousands of men bent under their task and sweating the money with which he triumphs. When people say, "You see clearly that a simple forgeman can achieve anything," they simply urge on the work of iniquity and aggravate social disquietude. The happiness of the elect is made up only of the misfortune of others, since it is their happiness that he reduces and steals. A comrade who is successful bars the road to thousands of others, and lives thenceforward upon their wretchedness and suffering. And such a fortunate man is often punished by success and by the fortune itself, which has been too hastily acquired, and is disproportionate, and therefore destructive. This is why the only thing to do is to return to all-saving labor, to the labor of all, to the gaining of a livelihood by all, the happiness of all being due only to their intelligence and their effort.

"It is necessary to give back; it is necessary to give back."

It is necessary to give back, because death results from the wealth stolen from others. It is necessary to give back, because the only cure, the only certainty, and the only hap-

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piness lie in doing so. It is necessary to give back, from a spirit of justice, and still more from personal interest, as the happiness of each can reside only in the happiness of all. It is necessary to give back, in order to compass our own welfare, and to live a healthy and a happy life in the midst of universal peace. It is necessary to give back, since if all the possessors of public wealth should to-morrow give up all the riches that they are squandering for their solitary pleasures—the great domains, the great exploitations, the manufactories, etc.—we should at once have peace, love flourishing among men, and such an abundance of blessings that there would no longer be a single wretched person upon earth. It is necessary to give back; it is necessary to set an example if it is desired that other necessary rich persons may understand and feel whence proceed the evils that they suffer, and desire again to seek in active life, in daily labor, the bread that never nourishes better than when it has been earned. It is necessary to give back, while yet there is time, when there is still some nobility in making restitution to one's comrades, in showing them that one has been deceived, and in resuming one's place for the common effort, with the hope of the approaching hour of justice and peace. It is necessary to give back, and thus to die with a clear conscience and a heart rejoicing at a duty fulfilled, leaving behind the lesson of reparation and liberation, to the last of the race, in order that he may raise it again, that he may save it from error, and that he may continue it in strength, in joy, and in beauty.

"It is necessary to give back; it is necessary to give back."

Tears started to Suzanne's eyes on seeing the exaltation that the great-grandfather's words aroused in her son Paul; while Boisgelin was manifesting his secret irritation by movements of impatience.

"But, grandfather," inquired she, "to whom do you wish us to give back, and how?"

The old man turned his luminous eyes towards Luc.

"My children," said he, "if I desired that the cre-

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ator of La Crêcherie should be here, it was because he understands me and will aid you. He has already accomplished a great deal in the work of reparation, and he alone can intervene and give back what remains of our fortune to the comrades of the present and to the sons and grandsons of those of former times."

Luc was oppressed by the emotion called forth by this exhibition of extraordinary nobility, but, nevertheless, he hesitated, feeling how hostile Boisgelin was.

"There is only one thing," said he, "that I can do. It is simply, if the owners of the Pit wish it, to receive them into our association at La Crêcherie. Like other works that have already joined us, the Pit will increase our family of workmen, and will at once double the importance of our growing city. And if, by giving back, you mean a return to greater justice and an approach towards absolute justice, I am able to assist you, and consent to it with all my heart."

"I understand," answered Monsieur Jérôme, slowly. "I do not ask more."

But Boisgelin, unable to contain himself longer, protested.

"Oh no! that is not what I wish. In spite of the great distress that such a course will occasion me, I am ready to dispose of the Pit to La Crêcherie. The selling price will be a matter for discussion, and I shall expect, in addition to a fixed sum, to preserve an interest in the works, the amount of which can also be discussed later. I am in need of money. I wish to sell."

This was the plan that he had been maturing for several days, under the impression that Luc had an intense desire for the property of the Pit, and that he could extract from the latter a considerable sum at once, while reserving an income from it in the future. But this plan fell entirely to pieces when Luc declared, in a distinct voice, in which could be perceived an irrevocable determination:

"It is impossible for us to purchase. Such a thing is contrary to the spirit that governs us. We are an associa-

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tion only, a family open to all brothers desirous of joining us."

Monsieur Jérôme, whose piercing glance was fixed on Boisgelin, answered, without temper and with his sovereign tranquillity:

"It is I who wish, and I who command. My granddaughter, Suzanne, here present, the joint owner of the Pit, will formally refuse any other arrangement if it is contrary to my will. And I am sure that she, like myself, will have but one regret, that of not being able to give back anything, for she will still receive the interest on her capital, which she will dispose of according to her own pleasure."

Boisgelin was silenced, submitting entirely in the bewildered feebleness into which his ruin had thrown him, and the old man continued:

"That is not all; there still remain Guerdache and the farm. It is necessary to give back; it is necessary to give back."

Then he finished expressing his wishes, although he was much exhausted and speech failed him. Just as the Pit was to be merged in La Crêcherie, so he wished that the farm should form part of the Combettes association. The whole property would go to enlarge the wide fields made common property by Lenfant, Yvonnot, and the other peasants, who had lived like brothers ever since their interests, well understood, had been reconciled. There was for them now but one earth, a single mother who nourished all, because she was beloved by all and cultivated by all. The entire plain of Roumagne would at last present one single uninterrupted harvest, the abundant granary of the regenerated Beauclair. As for Guerdache, since it belonged absolutely to Suzanne, he advised her to give it back to the poor and the suffering, in order that nothing might be kept of the corrupting wealth through which the Qurignons had suffered. Then, turning again to Paul, still seated on the side of the bed, and taking the boy's hands in his, he looked at him with eyes whose light was now begin-

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ning to grow dim, and said, in a voice becoming fainter and fainter:

"It is necessary to give back; it is necessary to give back, my child. You will keep nothing; you will give this park to our old comrades, in order that they may rejoice in it upon holidays, and that their wives and children may walk in it, to enjoy hours of health and gayety there under the beautiful trees. You will give it back, and you will also give up the house, this immense dwelling that we have not known how to fill, in spite of our money. I desire that it shall belong to the wives and children of the poor workmen. Let them be welcomed here, let them be cared for when they are ill or simply weary. Keep nothing, give back everything; give back everything, my child, if you wish to save yourself from the infection. And work; live only by your work, and seek the daughter of some old comrade who also works; marry her, and have by her beautiful children who will work, who will be among the good and the happy, and who will have other beautiful children who will carry on the eternal labor of the future. Keep nothing, my child; give back everything; it is the only safety, peace, and joy."

They were all weeping. Never had nobler, grander, or more heroic words been heard by human beings. The vast chamber had become sanctified thereby. The old man's eyes, which had beamed while he was speaking, became gradually dim, while his voice sounded more hollow as he approached eternal silence. He had accomplished his sublime work of reparation, of truth, and of justice, by lending his aid to that happiness which is the primordial right of all men. In the evening he died.

But when Suzanne accompanied Luc, on his leaving Monsieur Jérôme's room, they found themselves again alone for a few minutes in the little salon. They were so moved and so overcome by emotion that their hearts rose to their lips.

"Rely upon me," said he; "I promise you to watch over the execution of those last wishes, of which you are the depositary. I am now going to set about it."

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She took his hands.

"Oh! my friend, I put my faith in you. I know what miracles of kindness you have already realized, and I have no doubt as to the wonders that you will accomplish in reconciling us all. There is nothing but love. Ah! if I had only been loved as I love!"

He saw her trembling, he saw her thus betray the secret of which she herself had been so long in ignorance, but which was escaping her in this solemn moment.

"My friend, my friend!" cried she, "what strength I should have had for good, what aid I should have been capable of giving, protected by the arm of a good man, of a hero, who would have been my god! But, even though this is irrevocably too late, will you still accept me as a friend, a sister, who may, at least, be of assistance to you?"

He understood; it was the case, at once so sad and so sweet, of Sœurette over again. She had loved him without telling him so, without even owning it to him, as a good woman, longing for tenderness, and putting into him her dream of happy love, her consolation for the sufferings in her own home. Had not he himself loved her in the far-off days of their early meetings among the poor people whom they had known? This was a dream of love, by which he would have feared to offend her, and which remained in his heart like the perfume of some flowers of remembrance found again between two pages. And now that it was Josine whom he had chosen, now that these things were dead without possibility of resurrection, she bestowed herself, like Sœurette, in the fraternal companionship of a simple, devoted soul, desirous of being with him in his mission and his work.

"Will I accept you!" cried he, moved to tears. "Ah! yes, there is never enough of affection, or of tender and active good-will. The need of it is so great that you can expend your heart without counting the cost. Come with me, my friend, and you shall never leave me any more. You shall be part of my duty and my love."

She threw herself into his arms, overjoyed, and they

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embraced each other. The bond thus formed was indissoluble; it was a union of sentiment and of exquisite purity, where nothing had any existence but a common passion for the poor and the suffering, the inextinguishable desire to exterminate the misery of the world. He had a wife whom he adored, who gave him children of his own, and he would in future have two friends, two comrades with the delicate hands of women, who would aid him in the labors of his spirit.

Months passed by, for the settlement of the involved affairs of the Pit was very laborious. There was the debt of six hundred thousand francs, of which it was necessary to be free before anything could be done. Arrangements were made; the creditors agreed to accept reimbursement by annual payments on the profits to be realized by the working of the Pit after it was received into the association of La Crêcherie. It was necessary to estimate the value of the material and machinery saved from the fire. This, together with the extensive property along the Mionne, as far as old Beauclair, belonged to the Boisgelins; a modest income was assured to them, to be deducted from the profits before they were divided among the creditors. Old Qurignon's intention was thus only partially to be fulfilled in this period of transition when capital was still operating on the same footing as labor and intelligence, until it should disappear before the victory of labor, alone and supreme. But Guerdache and the farm, at least, could be returned absolutely to the community; and so they were given back in their entirety to the heirs of the laborers who had formerly paid for them with the sweat of their brows. As soon as the land of the farm was received into the association of Combettes, thus realizing Feuillat's secret idea so long concealed, it began to prosper, and became a source of considerable gain, all the proceeds being employed to convert Guerdache into a convalescent home for feeble children and mothers who had recently been confined. Beds were established, gratuitous houses for rest were opened, and the park, which was always flourishing, belonged now

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to the lesser people of the world. It was an immense garden, the paradise of a dream, where children played, where mothers regained their health, and where all the people came to enjoy themselves as in a palace of nature which was now a palace for all.

Years passed by. Luc had given Boisgelin one of the little houses at La Crêcherie, built at some distance from the cottage which he himself still occupied. The early period of this commonplace existence was very hard to Boisgelin, who did not resign himself to it without violent struggles. At one time he even wished to depart for Paris, and to live there, on chance, in his own fashion. But his innate idleness and the impossibility of earning his own living made him as feeble as a child, and placed him completely in the power of any one who was willing to take charge of him. Ever since his misfortunes, Suzanne, who was so reasonable and so gentle, but so firm, had complete authority over him, and he always ended by doing what she wished, like a poor, disabled being, swept about at the mercy of existence. Amid this active world of workers, idleness soon came to weigh upon him, so that he began to desire some occupation. He was tired of wandering about the entire day; he suffered from a secret shame and a need of action, having no longer the useless fatigue of a large fortune to manage and to spend. During the winter he could still hunt, but as soon as spring came a deadly dulness took possession of him during his rides on horseback. Thus he was ready to accept when Suzanne induced Luc to confide to him an inspectorship, a sort of supervision of the Communal House, which would require about three hours' time daily. His health, which had suffered, became somewhat re-established, but he never ceased to appear uneasy and to have the bewildered, unhappy manner of a man who might have fallen from another planet.

The years still rolled by. Suzanne had become the friend, the sister of Josine and of Sœurette, helping them and aiding them in their labors. They all three surrounded Luc, supporting and sustaining him, and fill-

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ing their part in his goodness, his tenderness, and his kindness. He smilingly called them the three virtues, and he expressed through them, under different forms, the same expansion of love, they being messengers of all that was deliciously tender to him in the world. They were occupied with the *crèches,* with schools, with infirmaries and convalescent houses; they went everywhere that there was weakness to protect, pain to relieve, or joy to create. Sœurette and Suzanne, above all, accepted and vied in doing the most ungrateful labors, of the kind that required personal abnegation and entire renunciation; while Josine, occupied with her children and the cares of her own increasing household, paid naturally less attention to these than the others. Moreover, it was she with whom Luc was in love, who represented the fulness of beauty and affection, while Sœurette and Suzanne were merely friends, comforters, and counsellors. Luc had sometimes still great trials, and it was these two friends who listened to him, and, by relieving his wounded spirit, devoted themselves entirely to their common labor of salvation. It was by woman and for woman that the new city was founded.

Eight years had passed by when Paul Boisgelin, then in his twenty-seventh year, married the eldest daughter of the workman Bonnaire, who was then in her twenty-fourth year. From the time that the land belonging to Guerdache had been received into the association at Combettes, Paul had attached himself to it passionately, together with the former farmer, Feuillat, not so much for the profit that the land could bring, as for the increasing extension of fertility in the wide fields that the property helped to enlarge. He became a farmer; he managed one of the sections of the common domain, which it had been found necessary to divide on account of its size into different groups of one united and affectionate family. It was in the little house at La Crêcherie, belonging to his mother, where he returned every evening to sleep, that he had known Antoinette, who occupied the adjoining house with her parents. A connection was thus

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formed between the members of this family of simple working-people and the heirs of the Qurignons, who were now reduced to such modest circumstances, and whose kindness was so overflowing; and although Madame Bonnaire, the terrible La Toupe, remained a disadvantage, the simple nobility of Bonnaire, that hero of labor and founder of the new city, was sufficient to make the tie an intimate one. It was a delight to both parties to see the children love each other and draw closer the bond thus established between the two classes formerly so antagonistic. Antoinette, who strongly resembled her father, was a tall and beautiful brunette, with a good deal of grace; she had passed through Sœurette's schools, and was now assisting in the great dairy, which was established at the end of the park beside the slopes of the Monts Bleuses. As she said, laughing, she was only a cow-herd, an expert in milk, cheese, and butter. When this son of the *bourgeois,* who returned to the land, and this daughter of the people who worked with her hands were married, there was a great *fête,* for every one wished to celebrate gloriously this symbolic marriage, which spoke of reconciliation manifested in the union of repentant capital with triumphant labor.

It was in the following year, just after Antoinette's first child was born, that the Boisgelins, accompanied by Luc, met together at Guerdache on a warm day in June. It was nearly ten years since Monsieur Jérôme had died, and since, according to his wish, the property had been restored to the people. Antoinette, whose confinement had been difficult, had been for two months an inmate of the convalescent house, which was established in the château where the Qurignons had once reigned. She was now able to walk in the magnificent shade of the park, leaning on her husband's arm, while Suzanne, in the character of a good grandmother, carried the newly arrived baby. What remembrances were thus called up of this royal mansion, now transformed into a fraternity house, of those woods, those lawns, and those avenues, which no longer resounded with the sound of costly *fêtes,*

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the gallop of horses, and the barking of dogs, but where the lesser people of the world enjoyed the healthfulness of the open air and the restful joy of the great trees! All the luxury of the magnificent domain was henceforward for them; the convalescent home opened to them its sunny rooms, its charming salons, its abundant kitchens; the park reserved for them its shady alleys, its crystal springs, and its turf, where the gardeners kept up for their enjoyment beds of sweet-scented flowers. They now enjoyed their share of beauty and of grace, so long refused them. It was delicious to see this infancy, this youth, this maternity, which for so many years had suffered shut up in sunless hovels, dying of foul poverty, now suddenly recalled to the joy of existence, to their share of all human creation, to this luxury of happy sensation which innumerable generations of wretched beings have regarded from afar off without the power to obtain.

Then, as the young couple, followed by their parents, reached the end of a row of willows where there lay a pool clear as a mirror, smiling under the azure heaven, Luc began to laugh gently.

"Ah, my friends," he said, "what a happy, gay remembrance comes back to me! Do you guess it? It was on the border of this tranquil water that Paul and Antoinette became betrothed twenty years ago."

He recalled the delicious scene of childhood that he had formerly witnessed on his first visit to Guerdache—the invasion of the populace in the person of three poor little street urchins, the little Nanet bringing his little comrades, Lucien and Antoinette Bonnaire, across the hedge to play near the pool; and Lucien's ingenious invention, the boat that went by itself on the water; the arrival of the three little *bourgeois* — Paul Boisgelin, Nise Delaveau, Louise Mazelle—enraptured with the boat, and fraternizing immediately with the others. Then the couples who had spontaneously formed themselves, with the resulting betrothal of Paul and Antoinette, Nise and Nanet, Louise and Lucien, with the smiling complicity of kindly nature, the eternal mother.

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"You do not remember?" asked Luc, gayly.

The youthful couple, who laughed with him, owned that the remembrance was a little far-fetched.

"If I was four years old," said Antoinette, much amused, "my memory cannot be very good."

But Paul made an effort, and looked fixedly into the past.

"I must have been seven. Wait, then! It seems to me that I have some vague recollections: the little boat that was brought back with a pole when the wheels would no longer turn; and then one of the little girls stumbled and fell into the pool; and then the boys, the little marauders who — ran away when they saw people coming."

"That is it exactly! That is it exactly!" cried Luc. "Ah, you remember! And I—I remember having on that day the first thrill of hope for the future, for it was a little sign of the future reconciliation. Divine childhood was working here, in its simple friendliness, with a new motion towards justice and peace. See, this little gentleman is commissioned to enlarge yet more the new happiness that you are going to realize."

He pointed to the infant, the little Ludovic, lying on the arm of Suzanne, who was so happy to be a grandmother. She in her turn said, laughingly:

"For the time being he is good, because he is asleep. Later in life, my dear Luc, we will marry him to one of your granddaughters, and in this manner there will be a complete reconciliation, and all the combatants of yesterday will be united and at peace in their descendants. Shall we make their betrothal to-day?"

"Certainly; I wish it! Our great-great-grandchildren will complete our work now in hand."

Paul and Antoinette, much touched, embraced each other, while Boisgelin, who was not listening, looked at this park, his own ancient domain, with a gloomy air, in which there was, however, no longer any bitterness, so greatly had his new surroundings bewildered and stupefied him. Thus they continued their walk through the

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shady alleys, Luc and Suzanne keeping silence and exchanging nothing more than smiles of delicious joy.

The future was already being realized a little more each day. As they all returned to Guerdache they stopped a moment before the façade at the left of the entrance, under the very windows of the room where Monsieur Jérôme had died. From thence the roofs of Beauclair could be seen in the distance, between the tops of the tall trees, and farther off La Crêcherie and the Pit. They gazed upon the vast horizon in silence. The Pit could be clearly distinguished, reconstructed, as it was, on the model of La Crêcherie, and forming with the latter one town where labor, reorganized and ennobled, became dignity, health, and gayety. Each day more justice and love were born. The advancing tide of little houses smiling among verdure, that tide which Delaveau had watched, with uneasiness, steadily advancing, had just reached the dark and ancient town, thus increasing, without arrest, the future city. These houses now occupied all the space from the slope of the Monts Bleuses to the Mionne; they would soon cross the narrow torrent, and sweep away old Beauclair, that sordid accumulation of hovels of servitude and wretchedness. And they would extend even to the fertile fields of Roumagne, forming a city of justice, freedom, and happiness.

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II

WHILE evolution was slowly progressing in Beauclair, while a new destiny for the city was becoming established by a beneficent hand, and was daily acquiring new strength, love—young, gay, and victorious—came into it with his irresistible power, marriages took place among the people, amalgamating classes, promoting harmony, and making peace. Victorious love overthrew obstacles, triumphed over the most obstinate resistance, producing a passionate desire for happiness in this life, for joy that responded to sunshine, and awakening new love of life, with aspirations for love and for happy parentage.

Of this last Luc and Josine had given the example. During the years that had elapsed since their marriage they had raised a large family—three boys and two girls. The eldest boy, Hilaire, who was born before the Pit was burned, was now eleven. Then two years apart came Charles, now nine; Thérèse, seven; Pauline, five; and Jules, three. The old house had been enlarged by a new wing, and there these children grew up with hope and laughter, ready to promote future associations. As Luc delighted to say to Josine, who smiled back at him, their own love increased as children were born to them, for she seemed more and more to belong to him as each child came. The woman he had once passionately loved, and for whose sake he had heroically entered on the great struggle of his life, was now a mother surrounded by her little ones in that home life which he now labored for everywhere, bringing peace where he had already proved a conqueror.

He and his wife still loved each other as lovers; for

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love does not grow old, it remains the eternal flame of an immortal brazier which nourishes the life of worlds. No house had ever contained more joy and cheerfulness than theirs; it was full of children and of flowers. They loved one another so dearly and so cheerfully that no grief ever seemed to come among them. And when some sorrowful recollection came to Josine, as she remembered past suffering and the gulf in which she would have perished but for the helping hand of Luc, she would clasp him round the neck with an uncontrollable impulse of gratitude, while he, much moved in his turn, would feel that she was the dearer for the wickedness and wretchedness from which he had saved her.

"Ah! how much I love you, my dear Luc! How can I ever thank you enough for having made me what I am, so respected and so happy."

"Dear, dear Josine, it is I who ought to love you fondly and gratefully, for without you what I have done would never have been accomplished."

And both felt the pure influence of the spirit of peace and righteousness which seemed to be part of themselves. They said:

"We must love others as we love each other, for love is the flame that draws all creatures together; our happiness as lovers and as a married pair will last only so long as all are happy. Divine Love, since nothing can exist but by Thee, aid us to complete our work, quicken all hearts, make all married couples in our city love one another and be blessed with loving children, joining in the universal happiness which ought to weld us all together!"

This was what they sportively called the "oraison" of the new religion of humanity. And in their own home, perfumed with affection, the flower of love bloomed deliciously during the years that followed the fire in the Pit. Nanet—little Nanet—who was growing to be a man, dwelt in Luc's house, with his "big sister," as he still called Josine. He was very intelligent, very brave, always on the watch to engage in any enterprise, and

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he so fascinated Luc that he became his dearest pupil, a disciple who, though young as yet, was thoroughly impregnated by the teaching of his master. Meantime, living with the Jordans, whose house was not far off, Nise—little Nise—was growing up, too, loving and beloved by Sœurette, who had taken charge of her the day after the catastrophe, happy in having an adopted child, and in having found in her a charming companion and a helper. In this way the young people, seeing each other every day, ended at last by living only for each other. Had they not belonged to each other from their infancy, in that far-off time when Love, the boy, divinely innocent, inspired them with an eager desire to see each other and to play together, tempting them to brave punishments and to climb walls to meet each other?. They were then fair and curly, like little sheep; they laughed the same silvery laughs when they fell into each other's arms every time they met, without knowing that a whole world kept them asunder, she the *bourgeoise,* the little daughter of the master of the works, he the street gamin, the poor son of a wretched manual laborer. Then came that frightful storm of flame. The great fire brought them again together; they seemed at the moment that he rescued her to be melted into one. Nise was saved clinging to Nanet's neck; both were badly burned; both had been at one moment in great danger. And now that they were once more fair with heads of curls, they laughed with the same ringing laugh, they had the same air, they were just like each other. She was a grown girl; he was a tall boy; she adored him; he did the same by her.

This idyl lasted seven years more, while Luc fashioned Nanet into a man, and Sœurette helped Nise to grow in goodness and in beauty. She was thirteen at the time when her father and mother so frightfully perished. Their bodies, burned to ashes, had never been recovered from the ruins. She long shuddered at the remembrance of that catastrophe, and as there was no hurry their friends thought it best to wait until Nise was twenty before deciding on their marriage, for then she could act

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for herself, uninfluenced by others. Nanet, too, was very young, barely three years older than Nise; he was still an apprentice under the affectionate superintendence of a master. What was more, they were so merry and so playful that they never seemed impatient to be married. They were always delighted to be together, to pass whole days laughing and looking into each other's eyes. Every evening they spent together, giving each other laughable narratives of what had happened to them during the day, commonplace things, mere nothings, and almost always the same. They held each other's hands sometimes for hours; this was their great delight, after which came the hearty kiss which they exchanged before parting. However, this good understanding, so tender and so true, had its little lovers' quarrels. Nanet sometimes thought Nise too proud and too opinionated. She liked, he told her, to play the princess. She was too fond of admiration; she loved beautiful clothes and *fêtes* where she might wear them. It was no fault, she thought, to be beautiful; it was, on the contrary, a woman's duty to be as handsome as she could. But what was not pretty, Nanet said, was to injure her beauty by airs that showed her contempt for persons beneath her station. Nise, who inherited something of her mother's love of pleasure and of her father's despotic disposition, got angry at this at first, being desirous of being held by Nanet to be perfection. Then, as she adored him, she confessed she had been wrong; she listened to him; she was anxious to please him by becoming exactly what was best in his eyes, the most sweet and simple of all women. And when she did not succeed, which sometimes happened in those days, she said, laughing, that her daughter, if she ever had one, would no doubt suit him much better, because the blood of princes required time to democratize itself through several generations.

At last, when Nanet was twenty-three, they were married. The wedding-day had been hoped for, looked forward to, and waited for for seven years. During that time there had not passed a day in which a step had not

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been made towards the conclusion of that long and happy engagement. And as in this marriage the daughter of Delaveau wedded the brother of Josine, the wife of Luc, all past hatreds seemed extinguished, the compact of friendliness seemed ratified, and there was a feeling that the occasion should be glorified and be made a *fête* that should emphasize pardon of the past and a happy entrance into a new future. It was decided that singing and dancing should take place on the site of the old Pit, in one of the halls of the new works which extended from La Crêcherie, stretching out the industrial city, which now occupied many acres and was continually growing.

Luc and Sœurette gayly superintended all the preparations; they organized the marriage *fête,* and were the legal witnesses, Luc for Nanet, Sœurette for Nise. They wanted to make of it a burst of triumph — a rejoicing over hopes already realized, a demonstration of the victory gained by the city of labor and peace, now prosperous and secure on its foundations. It is well for all people to take part in great rejoicings; public life needs days of joy, beauty, and enthusiasm. So Luc and Sœurette chose a hall of the great foundry — an immense place with its monstrous hammers, its gigantic travelling and movable cranes, all of prodigious power. The new buildings were full of light; they were built of bricks and steel; they were clean and wholesome, cheerfully lighted by great glass windows which let in air and sunshine in abundance. The machinery was not disturbed, for it was thought that nothing could be more appropriate on this celebration of triumphant labor than an exhibition of these mighty giants raising their shafts in great dark lines of puissant beauty—a beauty true to combination, strength, and precision. But they were adorned with green boughs; they were crowned with flowers as a mark of homage, as in old times men crowned altars. The brick walls were covered with garlands; they scattered on the pavement roses and flowering heather. It seemed like the flowering of human effort, that had been made

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through long ages to attain happiness. Happiness had suddenly burst into flower, perfuming the toil of the workman, which had formerly been so unjust and so severe; but now labor was free, attractive, and made everybody happy.

The two marriage processions set out, one from the home of the bridegroom, the other from that of the bride. Luc led Nanet, followed by Josine and by their children, while Sœurette led Nise, the adopted daughter of her brother Jordan and herself. That day, too, Jordan left his laboratory, in which he had passed whole years—years which had gone by him like hours while he was indefatigably engaged in researches and discoveries. The whole population of the new city, where all the works were stopped in sign of rejoicing, gathered on the line of march to cheer the bridal couple. The sun shone; the houses were gay with bright colors; the gardens were full of birds and flowers. And behind the bridal parties came a crowd of workers, a great assemblage of happy people, who soon overflowed the vast halls, though they were as broad and high as the aisles of a cathedral. But it was to the hall of the great foundry that the marriage procession bent its steps, and soon, large as it was, it proved too small for the occasion. Besides Luc, his family, and the Jordans, the Boisgelins were there; there were also present Paul, second cousin of the bride, and Antoinette; then there were the Bonnaires, the Bourrons, and the Fauchards—in fact, all the workmen whose strong arms had assisted to bring about this victory for labor. They swarmed, these men of good will and strong faith, who had assisted the enterprise from the first. Was not the crowd of co-workers who were present in some sort their family, brothers whose numbers multiplied from day to day? They were five thousand now; soon they would be ten thousand, one hundred thousand, a million, all the human race in the end! And the marriage ceremony held beneath those powerful machines, that were garlanded with greenery and flowers, was of a very touching simplicity.

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Luc and Sœurette, smiling, joined the hands of Nise and Nanet, saying:

"Love each other with all your hearts, be one in body and in soul, and be the parents of beautiful children, loving each other, as they will love you."

Those present shouted. The word on their lips was love. Love was proclaimed king, who alone can make labor fruitful, by making the human race more and more numerous, and kindling in all that flame which is the source of life.

But already Nise and Nanet began to feel that the ceremony was too solemn to suit them. They had loved each other as playfellows from early childhood. The two little curly sheep might, indeed, be grown up now, but they seemed still like playmates, in their wedding-garments, white and soft and charming. So they were not satisfied with this ceremonious joining of their hands; they fell into the arms of each other, crying:

"Ah! my little Nise, how happy I am now I have got you! I have been waiting for this moment for years and years."

"Ah! my little Nanet, how glad I am to be yours at last, for it is most true that you have bravely won me!"

"Little Nise, do you remember how I pulled you up by the arms that you might get over the wall, and how I carried you on my back when I was your horse, and pranced and tried to throw you?"

"And, Nanet, do you recollect when one day we played hide-and-seek, and you found me behind the rose-bushes, how we nearly died of laughing?"

"Little Nise! Little Nise! now we are going to love each other, as we played then, with all our might, with all our strength, and health, and gayety."

"Little Nanet! Little Nanet! we played together so much, we shall love each other much, but we shall love each other even more some day in our children; we may even romp again with our children's children."

They kissed each other, they laughed, they toyed in the fulness of their happiness. Excited by this spectacle,

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roused to enthusiasm by a breeze of gayety which was felt by all, the crowd clapped hands and cried that love the all-powerful promised them life and happiness. Love had founded the city, had sown it with good men as seed, and now at length had come the harvest, in which men would reap a crop of peace and righteousness.

Then the songs began; there were choruses in which one set of voices answered another; old men sang of their well-earned right to rest; men sang of the conquering results of labor, women of their sweet offices of helpfulness, children of their happy confidence and hope in the future. Then there were dances; all were joyful on that day; there was a grand round in which all joined, hand in hand, and it seemed to go on as if it were never coming to an end. It lasted for hours to the sound of music through all the great halls of the works. They danced in that of the crucible-furnaces, in the great hall of the rolling-mills, then in that of the puddling-furnaces; they crossed to the lathes; they came back to the place where steel was cast, filling all places with their turbulent gayety, and sending cheerful strains up to the high roofs which generally heard only the heroic panting of machines. The time had been when workmen had toiled and suffered much in the black, dirty, unwholesome prison which had once stood on that spot, and which fire had destroyed. Now sunshine, pure air, and life entered the workshops freely, and the dancers in the marriage *fête* went whirling among the great machines, the colossal presses, the steam-hammers, the enormous planing-machines, which, dressed with boughs and flowers, seemed to look down on them with smiles. The two young people just married led the revel as if they were the very soul of it all, as if the coming reign of fraternity and righteousness was assured by the victory of their long attachment.

Luc had planned a surprise for Jordan; he wanted him to have his share in the festival, for the labors of the scientist were going to do more for the city than a hundred years of politics. When darkness fell all the

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works were flooded with light. Thousands of lamps illuminated it with the light of day. This was because Jordan's labors had at last, after many defeats, discovered how to bring electric power unimpaired to the place where it was wanted, thanks to new apparatus and ingenious methods of transmission. The expense of hauling coal had been done away with. It was burned at the mouth of the mine, and the machines which transformed caloric power into electricity sent it straight to La Crêcherie by special cables which occasioned no waste, and which reduced its cost by one-half. This, therefore, was another great victory; La Crêcherie was profusely flooded with light, fresh power was added to the machinery, work was made easier, and profits increased. It was, in short, a fresh step taken on the road to general prosperity.

When Jordan, seeing this illumination, understood the affectionate design of Luc, he laughed like a child.

"Ah! my friend, you have given me my bouquet, as children bring flowers to their parents on their *fête* day. But you are right. I have done some little to deserve it. For ten years I have struggled to solve the problem. What obstacles have I not surmounted! What defeats have I not met with when I imagined success was certain! No matter; on the ruins of my unsuccessful experiments I set to work again next day. People always succeed who keep on trying."

Luc laughed with him, inspired by his faith and courage.

"I know that well," he said; "you are its living example. I know no greater, no more lofty master of power than yourself; and I have studied in your school. . . . So now you have accomplished a victory over night; you have put darkness to flight by this flood of electricity, which is not expensive. We shall now be able, from the top of La Crêcherie, every night, to light up what will seem like another sun. And, besides this, you have economized human labor; one man is enough now where two were formerly wanted, thanks to this mechanical power which by degrees will do away with the severity of labor.

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We honor you to-day as the master of light, heat, and power."

Jordan, who had been wrapped in a blanket by Sœurette, for fear of his being chilled by the night air, kept on looking at the works sparkling like some palace in fairyland. Small and frail, with his pallid complexion, and a look as if death might claim him at any moment, he walked through the halls, now blazing with splendor. It seemed to him like an apotheosis, since for ten years he had hardly ever left his laboratory, where he lived absorbed in his work, almost completely ignorant of events in the outside world, and leaving all care of his large and ever-increasing property to his friend and his sister. He therefore found himself on that marriage day very much as if he had been a man dropped down from another planet. He marvelled at the results that had been obtained, and at the success of the work of which he had been the most ignored, yet the most active creator.

"Yes—yes," murmured he, "it seems all right now; you have already made great progress. We are marching on; the future we have dreamed of is approaching. And I ought to apologize to you, my dear Luc, for I did not conceal from you at the beginning that I had not the smallest belief in your mission. It is singular how hard we find it to share the faith of others, when they are working on lines different from those we take ourselves! Now at last you have converted me. You certainly will hasten the reign of happiness, since you are every day acquiring more good from association and more justice. But you have still a great deal to do; and I, alas! have done nothing in comparison with what I had hoped to accomplish."

He grew grave and looked thoughtful.

"That interest on the net cost, though we have lessened it one-half, seems to me still too large. And then those costly complicated installations at the mouth of the shafts, those steam-engines, those boilers, and those miles of cables, of such expensive maintenance; they are all barbarous and consume time and money. We want some-

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thing else, something simpler, more practical, and more direct. Ah! I know in what direction I must look for it, but such a search would seem foolishness to most people. I do not dare to speak to any one of the task I have undertaken, for I cannot announce it myself as clearly as is desirable. . . . Yes, we must do away with the steam-engine and the boiler, which is a troublesome intermediary between the coal that is mined and the electricity produced. In a word, we ought directly to transform the caloric energy contained in coal into electric power, without passing it through mechanical energy. . . . How this is to be done I do not yet know. If I did know, the new problem would be solved. But I have undertaken the work, and I hope I shall not fail to find the solution. And you will see—then you will see that electricity will cost almost nothing, and we shall be able to give it to every one, to diffuse it, to make it the victorious agent of comfort to all."

He grew enthusiastic. He straightened himself on his feeble feet, with passionate gestures, he who was usually so silent and so meditative.

"The day must come," resumed he, "when electricity will be as common to all men as water in the rivers, as the air of heaven. We must not only give it, we must lavish it, and let men use it as they will, like the air we breathe. It will circulate through cities, just as blood circulates in actual life. In every house there will be little cocks to turn in order to have any quantity of power, heat, and light, even as water is dipped out of a spring. And at night, when the sky darkens, electricity will be like another sun which may put out the light of the stars. And it will do away with winter. It will make a universal summer; it will warm up our old world; it will melt the snows, and it will send their moisture to the clouds. For these reasons I am not as yet very proud of what I have done. There is as yet only a small result from my work in comparison with what remains to be accomplished."

And he ended by saying, with a look of quiet disdain:

"I cannot as yet even set my electric furnaces for

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smelting iron practically to work. They are mere laboratory furnaces. Electricity is still too dear. We must wait until it is remunerative to employ it, and then, I repeat, it should cost no more than the water of the rivers or the air of heaven. When I can furnish any amount of electricity without cost, my furnaces will transform metallurgy. And I am certain that I know the way; I am now at work on it."

The festivity at night was wonderful. Dancing and singing were resumed in the halls sparkling with electric light and crowded with people to do honor to the wedding. All felt joy in seeing labor set free and made healthful, joyous, and restored to a place of honor. Poverty had been overcome; common good fortune was giving back little by little to all in the community the right and the means to live comfortably and happily. They had in prospect a future of even greater peace and greater equity when the dream of brotherhood in a society associated and free should be fully realized. Love would bring about this miracle, and they escorted Nise and Nanet to their new home, with cheers for the love which had united them, the love which would make them the progenitors of children who would carry on love to the world's end.

About this time this revolutionary spirit of love made its way among the *bourgeoisie* of Beauclair. Its first appearance was in the peaceable household of the Mazelles, people who lived on the interest of their investments, lazy and kindly. They caught the first breath of the tempest. Their daughter Louise had always been to them an enigma. She bewildered and surprised them, for she was wholly different from themselves. She was very active, very enterprising, and was always busy about the house, saying that it would kill her if she had to live in idleness. The old folks, who thought it a blessing to have nothing to do, were very good people, glad to think they were now comfortably well off, by reason of the money they had put by years before, and they were resolved to enjoy it without incurring any risks or harbor-

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ing any ambitions. They could not understand why Louise should spend her days in useless activity. She was their only child, and would have a handsome fortune, all in government securities, and was it not unreasonable in her, under these circumstances, not to shut herself up in her own little peaceful corner and keep herself apart from all the worries of an active, moving world? They were satisfied with their own self-centred happiness, never casting a thought on the misery of others; honest, affectionate, full of sympathy for each other, though they cared for no one but themselves, adoring, cherishing, caressing, and cosseting each other. Then why should their daughter worry herself about every beggar who passed their house; about ideas which were bringing to pass great changes in the world; about events which interested people in the streets? She was always in a state of excitement and always wide awake. Everything interested her; she gave part of her life to all around her. Therefore, into the love and adoration with which they regarded her there entered some surprise that they should have had a daughter in whom they recognized no resemblance to themselves. And at last she put the finishing touch to their amazement by falling in love, a thing at which they at first shrugged their shoulders, thinking it a mere fancy; but it grew worse and worse, until they began to think that the end of the world must certainly have come.

Louise Mazelle, who had always been intimate with Nise Delaveau, continued to see her often at the Boisgelins, after they had moved into La Crêcherie. And there she had again met Lucien Bonnaire, her old playmate in the days when she climbed over walls to romp with little boys out of the street. They had both been present on the famous day when Lucien's little boat had sailed of itself on the waters of the pond, and again when they played hide-and-seek and climbed over the Delaveaus' garden wall. But now Lucien had grown to be a man. He was a strong, handsome fellow twenty-three years of age, and Louise was twenty. Though he no longer made little boats that could sail of themselves, he had become

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a most intelligent machinist under the instruction of Luc. He had a great taste for invention, and was likely to do good service to La Crêcherie, where his employment was that of setting up machinery. He did not pretend to be a gentleman. He was, on the contrary, rather proud of remaining a simple workman, like his father, whom he reverenced. And no doubt when Louise fell in love with him there was some attraction to her spirit of revolt, when she thought how she would shock the social ideas of the *bourgeois* class to which she belonged, and she felt delight in doing something that would be decidedly disapproved by people in society. Their old comradeship soon turned, on her part, into a passionate attachment, ready to brave all obstacles. Lucien, whose heart was touched by the tender devotion of this pretty young girl, so bright and smiling, soon fell equally in love. But of the two he was the more reasonable. He did not wish to offend any one. He suffered from the idea that she was something above him, and that she was too rich for him, so he only said to himself that he would never marry if he had to lose her; while she, at the mere thought of opposition to their marriage, became madly rebellious, and said frankly that she was ready to forsake fortune and social position to share her life with him.

Thus the struggle went on for six months. In Lucien's home the idea of such a marriage, instead of being held to be an honor, gave rise to opposition. Bonnaire especially, who was always sensible, would have preferred that Lucien should marry the daughter of some fellow-workman. The world had gone on rapidly of late years. He found nothing to be proud of in seeing one of his sons climb to a dais above him on the arm of a wife belonging to the *bourgeoisie,* which was already near its end. Before long it might be the *bourgeoisie* that would be glad to mate with the working-class, when it should need the red blood of health and strength for its recovery. There were sharp quarrels on this account in the Bonnaire household, for Bonnaire's wife, the terrible La Toupe, being proud of social advancement, would no doubt have given her

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consent if it would have made her a lady with fine dresses and jewelry. The revolution in other things which had been going on around her had never diminished her desire to govern and domineer. She had lost nothing of her detestable disposition, and even while living in ease and comfort was always reproaching her husband for never having laid by a fortune, like Monsieur Mazelle, for example, a sharp fellow who had ceased to do any work this long time. If he had she would have worn a hat (then the distinction between women of the working-class and ladies) and would have sauntered on the public promenades in the character of a lady of fortune, who was enjoying a life of idleness. And when she heard Lucien declare that if he married Louise he was resolved never to take a sou from the old Mazelles, she almost went out of her mind. She took part in the war against this marriage, which no longer seemed likely to bring profit to her family. What was the use of marrying such a poor, thin little thing, a girl who was not pretty, and who put on droll airs, if it were not for her money? It would put a finishing touch to all the other extraordinary things which bewildered and alarmed her, things which for a long time past she had ceased to understand.

One evening there was a stormy discussion on the subject between La Toupe, Bonnaire, and their son Lucien, in the presence of father Linot, who was still living, though he was now seventy. It was at the close of dinner, in the little dining-room, so clean and cheerful, the window of which opened on the little garden. There were flowers on the table, where the meals were always abundant; and father Linot, who now had as much tobacco as he liked, had just lighted his pipe, when La Toupe, at dessert, got into a passion about nothing, for the mere pleasure of getting angry, as had always been her custom. "So," she said to Lucien, "is it settled? Do you insist on marrying that young lady? I saw you with her today coming out of Boisgelin's. If you had any regard for us, it seems to me you would have given up seeing her,

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for you know that your father and I are by no means enchanted at the idea of such a marriage."

Lucien, like a good son, declined to discuss the subject, for he knew that arguments were of no avail. He turned to Bonnaire, and said, simply:

"But my father is ready to give his consent, I think."

This to La Toupe was like the cut of a whip, and she fell at once upon her husband.

"What! Do you think of giving your consent without consulting me? It is not two weeks since you said to me that such a marriage did not seem to you advisable, and that you were not without fears, if it took place, for the happiness of our son. You turn about like a weathercock."

Bonnaire quietly attempted to explain. "I would rather the boy had made another choice; but he is nearly twenty-four, and I shall not, in a matter on which he has set his heart, insist on his being governed by my will. He knows what I think, and he will act for the best."

"Well!" cried La Toupe, raising her voice, "you always were weak and easy; you think yourself a free man, but you always end by thinking the same as other people. You have now been twenty years with Monsieur Luc, and have always been saying that his ideas are not yours, and that reform should begin by giving all workmen their tools and taking no capital from the *bourgeoisie,* but in spite of that you give in to Monsieur Luc, and I dare say at this very moment you are quite satisfied with what you have done together."

Thus she went on, trying to wound him in his faith and in his pride, knowing on what points he was most sensitive. She had often exasperated him by forcing him to contradict himself, but this time he only said:

"No doubt what we have done together has turned out well; but still I may regret that it was not according to my ideas. Only you ought to be the last person to complain of things as they are here, for we no longer know what poverty is and are happy. Not one of those people with fixed incomes from investments are so well off as we are."

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She did not give in, but grew more angry.

"What is going on here I should be much obliged to you if you would explain to me, for I have never understood anything about it. If you are so happy, I am glad of it; I am not happy. Happiness consists, I consider, in having plenty of money, in giving up work, and doing nothing. With all the things you brag about, your division of profits, your shops where you buy things at cost price, your orders for pay, and your sinking-fund, I'd rather have a hundred thousand francs in my pocket to spend as I chose on what I fancy. I am unhappy—very unhappy!"

She was exaggerating, wishing to make herself as disagreeable as she could to her husband; but she was telling the truth. She was not acclimated in La Crêcherie, and suffered from inherited instincts. She was a woman who loved coquetry and expenditure, and communist association wounded such instincts. She was an active and efficient housewife, with an execrable temper, obstinate, narrow-minded, and stupid, especially when she did not choose to understand. She went on making her home like the infernal regions, notwithstanding her better qualities, and the great ease and comfort in which she and her family might have lived.

Bonnaire was roused at last, and said to her:

"You are mad. It is you who make yourself and us unhappy."

Then she began to sob. Lucien, always much concerned when one of these disputes took place between his parents, ceased to be silent. He got up and kissed her, and told her that he loved and respected her. But she was not mollified; she screamed at her husband:

"Just ask my father what he thinks of your new Works and your new doings, of all this famous justice and good fortune that is to regenerate the world! He is an old workman; you won't accuse *him* of talking nonsense, as you would if he were a woman; and he has lived for seventy years, so you can believe in his wisdom."

Then, turning to father Linot, who was sucking the stem of his pipe with the look of a satisfied child:

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"Father, are not those people idiots with their machinery and their talk of getting rid of masters and managers; and won't the time come when they will gnaw their own fingers?"

The old man, in bewilderment, looked at her fixedly, without speaking, and then answered, in a thick voice:

"Of course they are. Ah! the Ragus and the Qurignons were fellow-workmen once upon a time. There was Monsieur Michel, who was five years older than I. I went into the works under Monsieur Jérôme, his father. But before those two there had been a Monsieur Blaise, whom my father, Jean Ragu, and my grandfather, Pierre Ragu, worked under. Pierre Ragu and Blaise Qurignon were two workmen, two men who drew crucibles out of the same furnace. And now the Qurignons are millionaires and masters, and the Ragus are poor creatures still. Things come round. They begin over again. They never change. It is best to think that they are as well as they are."

He was wandering a little, half asleep, like some old animal turned out to die, which by some miracle has escaped the slaughter-house. Very often he could not remember the next day the events of the day before.

"But, father Linot," said Bonnaire, "things have been changing very much for some time past. Monsieur Jérôme, whom you were speaking of, is dead, and he gave back all that remained to him of his fortune."

"What do you mean? Gave it back? How?"

"Yes, he gave his workmen all the wealth that their labor and their long sufferings had won for him. You remember how it was a long time ago."

The old man seemed to search his darkened memory.

"Ah! ah! now I recollect. It was a queer story. Ah! well, if he gave back all he had he was a fool!"

These words were uttered with extraordinary emphasis, for the dream of father Linot's life had been to make a large fortune like the Qurignons, and to enjoy life after that as a triumphant employer, a gentleman of leisure, taking his pleasure from morning to night. That was his

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point of view, and that also of all the old worn-out employés of the Pit, resigned to slavery, who never ceased to regret that they had not been born to thrive on the toil of others.

La Toupe burst out with an insulting laugh.

"There, you see! father is not such a fool as all of you are. He's not looking for what everybody knows is impossible. Money is money; and when one has money one has the upper hand. So!"

Bonnaire shrugged his broad shoulders, while Lucien sat silent, looking out of the window at the rose-bushes blooming in the garden. What was the use of talking? She was utterly obstinate. Some day she would die in that communist paradise, surrounded by fraternal care and comfort, denying everything and regretting her old dark days of poverty, when she had been trying to accumulate ten sous that she might buy a bit of ribbon.

Babette Bourron entered at that moment. She was always cheerful, and continually delighted with her new surroundings. She had happily succeeded by her cheerful optimism in saving her husband, poor, simple Bourron, from falling into the gulf which had swallowed up Ragu. She had always been hopeful of the future, sure that things would come out all right, and sometimes when bread was scarce cheering herself with stories of extraordinary good luck sent down from Heaven. And as she said, laughingly, La Crêcherie, where labor had become clean, kindly, and remunerative, where people lived in the midst of plenty, and all the little luxuries which up to that time it had been in the power of the middle classes only to procure; was it not what she had dreamed about as paradise? So her plump little face, still fresh and fair, beneath her hair, tied up in a great bunch always askew, shone with happiness whenever she thought how her husband had been weaned from drink, and how she had two promising children for whom she would soon be looking out for suitable marriages; then how she would have them living with her in a beautiful house of her own, pretty and cheerful, like the houses of rich people.

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"So—it is decided at last," she cried, "that Lucien is to marry his Louise Mazelle, that charming little *bourgeoise* who is not ashamed of us?"

"Who told you so?" cried La Toupe, sharply.

"Why, Madame Luc did—Josine—whom I met this morning."

La Toupe grew pale with unexploded anger. In her persistent irritation against La Crêcherie there was always a connection with the hatred she felt for Josine. She had never pardoned "that woman" for her marriage with Luc, her promotion by a stroke of luck to be the wife of a man of consequence, beloved by everybody, and the mother of handsome children who were growing up to good fortune. And to think that she could remember the time when that wretched creature was starving, cast out upon the streets by her brother! Nowadays she felt herself crushed under her foot when she saw her in the street wearing a hat, like a lady. That good fortune should have fallen to Josine and not to herself was what she could not put up with!

"Josine," she answered, brutally, "instead of talking about marriages in which she has no concern, had better let other people forget all about her own. Just let me alone, all of you; you do nothing but worry me."

She went out of the room, slamming the door after her, while the others remained silent and uncomfortable. Babette was the first to laugh. She was quite used to the ways of her old friend, who, with serene indulgence, she always maintained was a good woman in spite of her bad temper. Tears were in Lucien's eyes, for it was the happiness of his future life that was under discussion in the midst of such bitter words and bursts of angry feeling. But his father kindly pressed his hand, as if to promise that he would undertake to arrange his affair. But Bonnaire himself had been made very sad. He could not bear to see happiness, even in the midst of peace and justice, at the mercy of family quarrels. Would it always be thus? Would one execrable temper spoil the fruits of fraternity? Father Linot alone was blessedly

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unconscious of the disturbance. He sat half asleep with his pipe in his mouth.

Meantime, if Lucien felt certain that his parents would consent in the end, Louise felt that hers would make a still stronger resistance, and the struggle grew greater every day. The Mazelles adored their daughter, and it was because they thus adored her that they were resolved not to give in. There were no violent scenes in that household, but they thought that by a sort of kindly inertia, a kind of vague somnolency, they might wear out her fancy. In vain she ran restlessly up and down the house; in vain she strummed feverishly upon the piano, flung bouquets, still fresh, out of the windows, and gave signs of the most passionate distress. They smiled at her peacefully, pretended that they did not understand her, stuffed her with dainties, and loaded her with gifts. She grew more and more exasperated at being overwhelmed with kindness while refused the only thing she longed for. At last it seemed to her parents that she must be ill. She took to her bed, turned her face to the wall, and would not answer when spoken to. They called in Dr. Novarre, who said that such maladies were not in his department of science, that the only cure for girls in love was to leave them at liberty to go on loving. Then, greatly distressed, since they now believed the case to be serious, the Mazelles discussed the matter in bed during a sleepless night, and asked each other whether or not they ought to give way. The matter seemed to them so grave, so fraught with possible ill consequences that they dared not trust themselves to come to a decision, and so resolved to call together their best friends and submit the case to them. Would it not be like deserting their own order to give their daughter to a working-man while Beauclair was in a ferment of revolution? They felt that such action on their part would be decisive, that it would be an underhand abandonment of the cause of the *bourgeoisie*—of the cause of trade and of the cause of government bondholders. It was natural and proper that in such a case leaders in their own class should be

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consulted. One fine afternoon they invited for this purpose Sub-prefect Châtelard, Mayor Gourier, Judge Gaume, and Abbé Marle, to take a cup of tea in their pretty garden, where they had passed so many idle days stretched out opposite each other in their great easy-chairs, watching the blooming of their roses, without giving themselves the trouble to converse.

"You agree," said Mazelle to his wife, "that we will do whatever these gentlemen shall advise. They know more than we do, and no one can blame us if we follow their counsel. I am beginning to feel as if I had lost my reason, for all this fills my brain from morning till night."

"I feel so, too," said Madame Mazelle. "Life was not made to be always thinking. Nothing can be worse for my complaint. I feel it already."

Tea was served in the garden, in an arbor, at the close of a beautiful sunny afternoon. Sub-prefect Châtelard and Mayor Gourier were the first to arrive. They had remained inseparable since Leonore's death. A strong tie seemed still to unite them after they lost Madame Gourier, the ever-beautiful Leonore. For five years they had watched over her, a helpless invalid, unable to rise from her couch because her lower limbs were paralyzed. They surrounded her with every care; her friend assisted her husband to take charge of her, and read to her at times when he had to be away. It was in Châtelard's arms that Leonore suddenly died one evening, when he was trying to help her to swallow a cup of herb tea, while Gourier was outside the house smoking a cigar. When he came in both men wept together. Since then they were almost inseparable, always being together, for municipal business now gave them plenty of leisure. Their administration of affairs was now strictly theoretical, after long consultations, in the course of which the sub-prefect had persuaded the mayor to follow his example, to shut his eyes, and to let things go on in their own way, rather than ruin his own life by opposing the progress of an evolution that no man upon earth could retard or prevent. Still Gourier, who

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had occasional moments of apprehension, when he found himself confronted by cruel ideas, found it hard to adopt such amiable philosophy. He had been reconciled to his son Achille, who had had by Ma Bleue, in the tiny home they shared together, a charming little daughter called Léonie, with eyes as blue as the great lake, or the vault of heaven—eyes like her beautiful mother's. She was now a tall girl, nearly twenty, of an age to be married. She had conquered the heart of her grandfather, and this influenced him to open his doors at last to the son who had cast off his authority, and to Ma Bleue, whom he had always looked upon as a sort of savage. He said it was hard for him, as a mayor, the magistrate who was authorized to make legal marriages, to receive under his roof a revolutionary couple, married without the formalities of the law, under the stars on some warm evening. But times were so strange! Wonderful things were taking place, and so charming a little granddaughter was an acceptable present. Châtelard had recommended reconciliation, and Gourier, after his son had brought him Léonie, became better acquainted with La Crêcherie, though it always seemed to him the very place to produce catastrophes, in spite of his having been obliged to put his shoemaking establishment into the association, which had drawn into its syndicate all the other clothing factories.

Judge Gaume and Abbé Marle were still expected, but the Mazelles could not refrain from at once setting their case before the sub-prefect and the mayor. Ought they to submit to an unreasonable caprice in the case of their own child?

"You will understand, Monsieur Châtelard," said Mazelle, with an uneasy look of importance, "that besides the annoyance we shall feel at such a marriage, it may have an unfortunate effect upon society; we feel the weight of our responsibility towards the leading people of our class. We are going down into the depths."

They were sitting in the shade perfumed by climbing roses, before a table on which was a beautiful cloth embroidered in colors; little cakes were set upon it; and

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Châtelard, always correctly dressed, and still handsome, notwithstanding his age, smiled one of his discreet but ironical smiles.

"But we are already in the depths, dear Monsieur Mazelle. You would do wrong to bring trouble on yourself in order to spare the government, the administration, or even society; for don't you see that all these things nowadays exist only in name. . . . Of course I am your subprefect still, and my friend Gourier is still your mayor. Only behind our backs there is no longer any real and solid government; we are mere phantoms. It is just the same with the rich and powerful; their power and their wealth are more and more impaired every day by this new organization of labor; so do not take the trouble to defend them, for they themselves, yielding to the general vertigo, are becoming active agents in the revolution. Come! come! You need not resist; I advise you to give up."

He was fond of indulging in this kind of pleasantry, which always frightened the good *bourgeois* of Beauclair. It gave him a chance to say what he thought under cover of a joke, for he was convinced that the old world was coming to an end, and that a new world would be created out of its ruins. In Paris important events were taking place—the old edifice was falling to pieces stone after stone, making room for a new temporary structure which outlined the future city of justice and peace.

These things all proved to him that he had been always right, and he was glad to stay forgotten in this little corner of one of the French provinces, where he did as little governing as possible, feeling sure as he watched events that he would die as he had wished to die, with the system under which he had lived so many years, putting up with its defects like a cheerful and philosophic man of the world.

The Mazelles grew pale. Mazelle, while his wife lay back in her chair with her eyes fixed on the cakes, cried:

"Really?—do you think we are already in so much danger? I knew that there was some talk of reducing the interest on government securities."

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"Government securities," resumed Châtelard, quietly, "government securities will be done away with in the next twenty years, or at least some conversion will gradually absorb them, and leave nothing for the bondholders. They are talking of some project of the kind now."

Madame Mazelle gave what might have seemed to be her last sigh.

"Oh, we shall be dead, I trust, before that time. We could not bear to see such infamies. It is our poor daughter who would have to suffer, which is another reason for wishing her to make a good marriage."

But the pitiless Châtelard went on to say:

"There are no more good marriages, that is, rich marriages, to be depended upon, for there will be no more inheritance. That is almost settled already. In future every married pair will have to carve out their own fortune. And whether your daughter Louise marries the son of a *bourgeois* or the son of a laborer, their capital will be just the same—love, if they are so fortunate as to love each other, and activity in the work they do in life, if they have capacity and are not lazy."

There was complete silence. They heard the wings of a little bird fluttering among the roses.

"Then this," said Mazelle, at last, "is your opinion and the advice you give us, Monsieur Châtelard? You think we may accept this Lucien Bonnaire as our son-in-law?"

"Good gracious, yes! The world will turn round all the same, I assure you; and if the two young folks love each other, you are sure of making two happy people at least."

Gourier thus far had said nothing. He felt very uncomfortable at having been called to settle such a question, when his own son, despairing of his consent, had at one time gone to live with Ma Bleue among the rocks —Ma Bleue, that wild girl whom he now sheltered in his *bourgeois* home. And he did not conceal his embarrassment.

"It is true. The best thing to be done is to marry

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them. When parents too strenuously oppose a marriage, young people run off, and then— Ah! what times we are living in now!"

He raised his arms to heaven, and it needed all the ascendency of Châtelard to prevent him from falling into a fit of black melancholy. Dissipation in his younger days had brought on him premature old age, with a constant tendency to fall asleep. He would sleep at the table or anywhere, in the course of conversation, even out-of-doors when he was walking. And he concluded with the resigned air of some old manager of a once flourishing business when conquered by events:

"After all, what would you have? After us the deluge! as many people like us now say. Our day is over."

As he said this Judge Gaume arrived, but he was very late. His legs were swollen, and he walked with difficulty even with the help of a cane. He was nearly seventy, and was looking forward to his retirement with secret disgust for those laws of human justice which he dealt out to others for so many years, confining himself to a strict interpretation of the written code, like some priests who have lost their faith but cling to dogma. In his own home the tragedy of love and treachery had been pitilessly repeated. After the death of his wife, who had committed suicide before his eyes, when she had confessed her guilt, his misfortunes were completed by the conduct of his daughter Lucille, the wife of Captain Jollivet. Her husband had been killed by her lover, with whom she afterwards eloped. It was a horrible story. Whether Captain Jollivet fell in a personal encounter with the young man, or whether he was killed by a knife thrown at him by the latter, was never known.

A frightful storm broke over the poor judge; his daughter had eloped, and the police were in search of her; his son-in-law had been found lying in a pool of blood, and was buried with a knife wound in his heart. The judge remained alone, no one of his family being left but Lucille's son André, a boy of sixteen, a delicate, affectionate lad, sad heritage of an unhappy marriage. He

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was the object of his grandfather's love and tender care. It was enough, the judge thought. Fate could not justly inflict more punishment upon him for the mother's and the daughter's crimes. And he asked himself how he could provide a future settlement in life for this young man, where he could be assured of faithful love and of strict justice, and might restore his race to happiness and virtue.

When he was told of the subject in question, and when Mazelle had asked his opinion as to a marriage between Louise and Lucien Bonnaire, Judge Gaume immediately said:

"Let them be married at once if they love each other so much that they are ready to brave all obstacles and take the consequences of opposition in their families. Love alone promotes happiness."

Then he regretted having thus opened his heart; it seemed to him as if his words were a confession of how his own life had been embittered; he was now about to die, clinging to what was false, his rigid sense of justice, his cold austerity. He resumed:

"You need not wait for the Abbé Marle. I have just met him, and he asked me to beg you to excuse him. He was hastening to the church to get the holy oil and to administer extreme unction to old Madame Jollivet, my son-in-law's aunt, who is on her death-bed. Poor old abbé! he will lose in her one of his few remaining penitents. There were tears in his eyes."

"One good thing is that we have got rid of our *curés,*" said Gourier, who was bitter against priests. "We should now have the republic to ourselves if they did not try to take it away from us. It is they who incite the common people to overturn the present government and to try to get the mastery."

"Poor Abbé Marle," repeated Châtelard, sympathetically. "I am sorry to see his church so empty; and you are right, Madame Mazelle, to continue to send him flowers for the altar of the Virgin."

Silence once more ensued. The sad remembrance of

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the unhappy priest passed like a shade between them and the sunshine, with its perfume of roses. When the abbé lost Leonore he had been bereft of his dearest and most faithful parishioner. Madame Mazelle was still left, but she was not a real believer; what interested her in religion was its adornments, as is the case with many another woman of her class in the *bourgeoisie*. The abbé well knew what would be his own fate. Some day he would be found dead before the altar, among the ruins of the roof of his church, which had been out of repair for years, but which he had not had money to restore. In the mayor's house and in the sub-prefecture there were no funds to be had for such a purpose. He had tried to interest his parishioners, but, in spite of his exertions, he could obtain only an insufficient sum. Now he had given up hoping to make the repairs; he expected the roof to fall, and went on with the usual services, not appearing to be aware of what every one else apprehended, namely, that the roof would fall upon his head. His church grew more and more empty. God seemed to have forgotten him. He expected and wished to die when the house of God should crumble to pieces. He hoped to be crushed with the weight of the great crucifix suspended from the wall. Then they would have the same tomb in the earth, which, in the end, makes restitution of all things.

Madame Mazelle was now too much absorbed by her own troubles to interest herself greatly about Abbé Marle. If nothing intervened to relieve her from her difficulties she began to fear that she should fall really ill, she who had enjoyed so much tender care and petting when she had been a victim to the nameless malady, which had been one of the pleasures of her existence. As all her expected guests except Abbé Marle were present, she rose from her chair to pour out tea, which smoked in her beautiful thin porcelain cups, while a ray of sunshine gilded the little cakes placed on plates of cut glass. She shook her large head placidly. But she was not yet convinced.

"You are right, my friends," said she. "We are com-

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ing to the end of the world; yet I cannot make up my mind about this marriage."

"We will wait a while longer," said Mazelle; "perhaps we may wear out Louise's patience."

But, to the astonishment of her parents, Louise appeared before them, standing at the entrance of the arbor in the sunshine among the roses. They had supposed she was in her own room, in her invalid's chair, suffering from that nameless malady that a loving and beloved husband alone can cure, according to Dr. Novarre's prescription. She suspected they were met to decide upon her fate, and had merely slipped on a white dressing-gown, with little red flowers on it, and fastened up her beautiful dark hair. She had come down in haste, trembling with excited feeling, and was lovely, with her delicate face, in which her eyes (set a little obliquely) beamed brightly, for even grief could not dim their native lustre and gayety. She had overheard her parents' last words.

"Ah, mamma! ah, papa!" she cried, "what do I hear you saying? Do you think my love for Lucien is the passing fancy of a little girl? I have already told you, and I tell you again, I want Lucien, and I will have Lucien for my husband."

Mazelle, already half conquered when this bright vision appeared, was still debating the question.

"But, my poor child, just think! Our fortune, which will all come to you, is already in danger, and you may find yourself some day without a penny."

"Try to understand the situation," interposed Madame Mazelle. "With our money, even if our fortune should be somewhat impaired, you may yet make an excellent marriage."

Then Louise burst out with the utmost vehemence.

"I don't care for your money! You can keep your money! If you gave it to me Lucien would not have me. Your money! what do we want with it? What's the good of money? It does not create love or make people happy. Lucien will earn our bread, and I will help him, if there is any need for my help. It will be delightful!"

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She uttered this with such youthful hope and enthusiasm that the Mazelles, who were a little in dread lest she should lose her reason, thought only of calming her, and at once gave in. They were, indeed, not the kind of people to have held out long, for they prized too much their own tranquillity. As they drank their tea Sub-prefect Châtelard, Mayor Gourier, and Judge Gaume smiled with some embarrassment, for they felt that the fearless avowal of love made by this reckless young person swept over them as a wind might over straws. What could not be cured would have to be endured.

Châtelard wound up the conference with an air of good-natured mockery, which was not very sympathetic.

"Our friend Gourier is right. All is over for us. What we have now to do is to obey the children."

The wedding festivities on the marriage of Louise Mazelle and Lucien Bonnaire took place a month later. Châtelard, for his own particular amusement, persuaded his friend Gourier to give a ball at his house on the wedding-night, as if to do honor to their old friends the Mazelles. For his own part, he thought it a good joke to make the *bourgeoisie* of Beauclair dance at this wedding, which was symbolical of the advancement of the working-classes. It was amusing to think that they would dance over the wrecks of authority in the mayor's house, which by degrees would become a communal mansion, where the office of the mayor would be to form a bond of union between various social groups. The hall was dressed very luxuriously. There was music and singing, as there had been at the wedding of Nise and Nanet. There was also shouting when the bride and bridegroom appeared, Lucien looking so sturdy and strong, with his comrades from La Crêcherie, Louise so delicate and excitable, escorted by all the *beau monde* of Beauclair, whose presence her parents had requested, as a sort of last protestation against this union. Only it happened that these pretensions were swamped by the flood of their social inferiors; and catching the spirit of general joyfulness, which was more and more rapturously expressed, they were con-

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quered and lost their social prejudices, so that out of this occasion sprang other marriages between the lads and lasses of the two hostile classes. Once more love was triumphant — all-powerful love, which inflames all the earth and bears it onward towards a happy future.

Youth seemed to be having its own way everywhere; engagements were formed and marriages took place; young men and maidens whom the traditions of two social systems seemed to have separated, set forth on their march to the future city, drawn together by the eternal attraction of man to woman. The old tradespeople of Beauclair, whose business had been so much impaired, now gave their sons and daughters to the workmen of La Crêcherie and to the peasants of Combettes. The Laboques began by letting their son Auguste marry Marthe Bourron and their daughter Eulalie espouse Arsène Lenfant. For several years they had given up their struggle against La Crêcherie, acknowledging that trade, as it was in old times, was no more, and that to struggle against fate was useless, for it would consume both energy and riches. At first they had to agree to let their shop in the Rue de Brias become a depository for the productions of La Crêcherie and the other factories which had joined the association. Afterwards they made another step, and agreed to close their shop, which had been swallowed up in the general stores, in which the kindness of Luc provided a sort of place for them as superintendents. Then, besides, old age had come upon them; they felt themselves put aside; they were bitter; they were frightened at finding themselves in a world that had not their passion for making money—a world which was carried on by a younger generation, and was enlarged by other industries and other joys. And so it chanced that their two children, Auguste and Eulalie, who followed the dictates of love, that great power which works for harmony and peace, were married according to their own choice, without any opposition from their parents, except the sort of disapprobation all old people are apt to feel when they mourn for the "good old times" that

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have passed away. The two weddings were to take place the same day at Combettes, which had become a large place, the *faubourg,* indeed, of Beauclair, with large, cheerful buildings, which testified how much riches could be drawn from the soil. And the double marriage took place in harvest-time, on the last day, when there were enormous ricks rising in all directions over the now whitened plain.

Feuillat, the old farmer, had before this married his son Léon to Eugénie, the daughter of Yvonnot, the assistant of Lenfant, the mayor, who long before had become reconciled with his principal. That reconciliation had brought about a good understanding among the other inhabitants of the commune; the general impulse towards association had converted the poor little village, once full of hatreds, into a flourishing place, full of good feeling. Feuillat, who was now a very old man, was a sort of patriarch in this agricultural community. It had been his dream of other days, his secret hope when he had opposed the murderous old system of farming, with a dim prescience of the great prosperity that cultivators might derive from their land if they would agree to work it by scientific methods. This plain farmer, once hard and rapacious, like most men of his class, seemed to have been enlightened by the true spirit of love for the soil that during so many years had supported his ancestors in poverty, so that he foresaw the way to save it, by promoting peace among such peasants as would listen to him, urging them to labor in common, so that their land might once more be their mother, when ploughed, sowed, and harvested as if by one sole family. And he had had his part in the realization of this dream. He had seen neighbors unite their fields, and the farm of Guerdache join the commune of Combettes; other and smaller communes, too, joined the association. He had seen a vast domain formed and set in motion, ever increasing until it seemed likely to annex the whole of the great plain of Roumagne. Lenfant and Yvonnot had founded the association, but Feuillat had been its moving spirit. These

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three formed a sort of council of the elders, which was consulted about everything, and it was found well to follow their advice.

So when the marriage of Lenfant's son Arsène to Eulalie Laboque was decided on, and her brother Auguste wanted to be married on the same day to Marthe Bourron, Feuillat had a plan that everybody was delighted with of giving a great beautiful *fête* on the occasion, which should be at the same time a celebration of the pacification of Combettes, its triumph and prosperity. The guests would drink toasts to the brotherhood of the peasant and the artisan, who had been so wickedly opposed to each other in former years, and whose alliance would be the best means of bringing about prosperity and social peace. They would drink to the end of all antagonisms, to the annihilation of that barbarous system of trade which had kept up hostility between the tradesman who sold tools, the peasant who grew grain, and the baker who sold the loaves that had been made dear that so many middlemen might make their profit. And what better day could have been chosen to celebrate this reconciliation than that on which former enemies, the representatives of two classes once eager to destroy and devour each other, were exchanging their sons and daughters in marriage—marriages which would hasten the prosperity of the future?

Now that the evolution of this happy life drew heart to heart, it was well that public rejoicings should mark the stage of progress, and at the same time celebrate the splendid harvest which was about to fill the Combettes granaries. It was decided that the festivities should take place out-doors, near the town, in a great field where tall stacks of wheat should be erected to resemble the columns of a gigantic temple; these stacks shone like gold when the rays of the sun fell upon them. Far off the columns of stacks of grain stretched to the horizon, proving the inexhaustible fertility of the soil. There they sang, there they danced, in the sweet perfume of the ripened wheat, in the midst of that vast fertile plain,

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from which the work of men who had become reconciled drew bread enough to satisfy them abundantly.

The Laboques brought with them to the *fête* all the old tradespeople of Beauclair, and Bourron brought with him all La Crêcherie. The Lenfants were there on their own ground, and never before had there been such a scene of fraternization, the various groups intermingling with each other as if they formed one family. Of course the Laboques were not gay, and seemed embarrassed. But Lenfant was heartily merry, though he was nothing to Babette Bourron, who, with her usual happy temper and her confidence that everything would turn out right in the end, was in a state of triumph. She was the incarnation of hope, and gleamed behind the two newly wedded pairs. And when these arrived—Marthe Bourron on the arm of Auguste Laboque, and Eulalie Laboque on the arm of Arsène Lenfant—they brought with them such a sunshine of youth, joy, and strength that an endless cheer rose from the guests from one end to the other of the yellow stubble-fields. They were saluted with kind words; their neighbors loved them, and their marriage was in course of celebration because they represented love triumphant and victorious, the love whose warmth had already touched all hearts and had given them such splendid harvests — love by which they and their prosperity would increase and multiply—they were a people united, free henceforth, independent of animosities and of hunger. On that day other engagements took place, as had been the case when Lucien Bonnaire and Louise Mazelle were married. Madame Mitaine, of the bakery, who, though she was sixty-five, was still known as "the beautiful Madame Mitaine," kissed Olympe Lenfant, sister of one of the brides, and told her how happy she should be to call her her daughter, for her son Evariste had told her he adored Olympe. Madame Mitaine had lost her husband ten years before, and no longer kept her shop. She had joined the co-operative stores of La Crêcherie, as had nearly all the retail dealers in the city. She lived, like a good woman who had done her work

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and was now taking her rest, with her son Evariste, and both were proud that Luc had put them in charge of the electric kneading-troughs, which daily gave out an abundance of light, white loaves, enough for all the population. And while Evariste was giving Olympe a kiss, at which she blushed with pleasure, as it sealed their betrothal, Madame Mitaine noticed a little old woman, very thin and very sombre, sitting under a wheat-stack. It was her old neighbor, Madame Dacheux, the widow of the butcher. Madame Mitaine went over and sat down beside her.

"It is as it ought to be," she said, gayly, "that all should end in marriage, for these young people were all playmates once, you know."

But Madame Dacheux was sad, and made no answer. She, too, had lost her husband, who had died from an unskilful blow of his own cleaver which had cut off his right hand. Some people said that this blow was not the result of an accident, but that the butcher had struck off his own hand in a furious fit of anger rather than sign the paper which would have given up his shop to La Crêcherie. Events that had taken place before that time, the danger that threatened that "holy meat," the food of rich people, might be brought within the means of every workman, and be served upon the tables of the poor, had upset all his ideas, as a stout tyrannical tradesman of violent temper and reactionary opinions, to such an extent that it may have affected his brain. He died of gangrene, resulting from the wound which had not been properly attended to, leaving his widow terrified by the fierce curses he had heaped upon her in his last moments.

"How about your Julienne?" asked Madame Mitaine, in her amiable way. "I met her the other day. She is superb."

The butcher's widow answered at last:

"She is dancing over there. I am watching her."

It was true that Julienne was dancing with a tall, handsome man, Louis Fauchard, son of the frail workman who once drew crucibles out of the furnaces. She was stout and fair, and her face was beaming with health and

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satisfaction, as she was passionately enfolded in the arms of her vigorous young partner, with his kindly face, one of the best forgemen in La Crêcherie.

"So that's to be another marriage?" said Madame Mitaine, laughing.

Madame Dacheux gave a start, and cried out:

"Oh no! oh no! how can you say that? You know what were the ideas of my poor husband. He would come out of his grave if I were willing to marry his daughter to a working-man, to the son of poor people, the son of that Natalie who was so pitiful, always wanting something to make soup of on credit. He often turned her out of his shop because she did not pay what she owed him."

She went on to tell more about her sufferings in a trembling voice. Her husband often appeared to her at night. Though he was dead he made her bend to his despotic authority. He scolded her and quarrelled with her in her dreams, and made devilish threats if she disobeyed him. The poor little woman, always easily frightened, was so unhappy as to find no peace even in her widowhood.

"If I were to consent to let Julienne make a match he did not approve," she said, "he would come back every night and abuse me and beat me."

She was weeping, and Madame Mitaine tried to comfort her, assuring her that such nightmares would cease if she tried to make every one happy around her. Just then Natalie, the plaintive Madame Fauchard, who once had been always trying to procure four bottles of wine nightly for her husband, drew near them with a little timidity. She was suffering no longer from keen poverty, but was living in one of the little bright houses of La Crêcherie with Fauchard, who had given up work, having become infirm and almost childish. She also had in her house her brother Fortuné, about forty-five years of age, whose mere animal, mechanical work at the Pit, from the time he was fifteen, had early made him an old man, deaf and blind. So, in spite of the comforts she

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owed to the new system of pensions and mutual help, she was still doleful, a sad relic of the past, with her two men and her two children to be looked after, as she often said. It was an object-lesson, an example of what came from the old system of wage-earning, that was thus presented to the younger generation.

"You have not seen my men, have you?" she asked Madame Mitaine. "I have lost them in the crowd. Ah! there they are."

And the two passed by as she spoke, holding each other up, each supporting the other's tottering steps. Fauchard, who had gone all to pieces, now seemed like a ghost out of the old world of toil and misery. Fortuné, younger than Fauchard, but quite as much broken, seemed to have become imbecile. And in the vigorous crowd, so overflowing with new life and hope, among these ricks of grain smelling so sweet, and containing wheat enough to support every one, they walked slowly and feebly without understanding what they saw, and without returning their neighbors' salutations.

"Leave them in the sunshine; it will do them good," said Madame Mitaine. "There's your son; he is happy and hearty."

"Oh yes; Louis' health is excellent," replied Madame Fauchard. "Nowadays sons are not like their fathers. Just see how he is dancing! He will never know cold or hunger."

Then the baker's widow, with the kindly audacity of one who had been a beauty all her life, made an attempt to promote the happiness of the pair near her, who were dancing and laughing so confidingly. She drew the two mothers together. She made Madame Fauchard and Madame Dacheux sit side by side, and then managed to exert such an influence on the latter that she moved her at first, and finally convinced her. What she suffered from, Madame Mitaine assured her, was her loneliness. If she had some dear little grandchildren to climb into her lap they would put the ghosts to flight, and she would see no more of them. The poor little woman cried at last:

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"Oh! dear me! I wish it, too; only they must not let me live alone. I never said no—to any one. It was only he who would not approve of it. But if you will all take my part, and if you will promise to help me—do what you will! Do what you will!"

When Louis and Julienne heard that their mothers had given their consent, they ran and hugged them in their arms with tears and laughter. And among so much happiness, this made more happiness still.

"Just see!" resumed Madame Mitaine; "how could you have separated these two young people, who seem to have grown up for each other? I have just given my Evariste to Olympe Lenfant, and I remember the day when she came, a little tot, into my bakery, and my boy gave her some cakes. It is just the same with Louis Fauchard—how often have I seen him prowling around your butcher shop, Madame Dacheux, and playing with Julienne! The intermarriages of the Laboques, the Bourrons, the Lenfants, and the Yvonnots are the occasion of this *fête,* but all the young people grew up together; they were playmates even while their parents were ready to rend and devour each other, and this day is the grand harvest of reconciliation and good-will."

Saying this she laughed aloud with her look of infinite kindness; there seemed always about her a perfume of the warm bread, in the midst of which she had lived fair and handsome in her bakery. Around her joy seemed to increase. They came and told her that more engagements had been that day made—Sébastian Bourron to Agathe Fauchard, and Nicolas Yvonnot to Zoé Bonnaire. Love, sovereign and conqueror, had enlarged his borders, promoting reconciliation by mingling class with class. It was Love who had fertilized the great plain now covered with trees, bearing such a profusion of fruit that their branches were near breaking, and Love had covered the furrows with such an abundance of wheat that the ricks from one horizon to the other seemed columns in a temple of peace. A sweet and powerful fragrance came from this fertility which presaged the re-

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sult of these happy marriages, whence future generations would be born—generations more righteous and more liberal still. Till dusk under the stars the *fête* lasted, a triumph of love, drawing hearts together, melting them into each other while songs and dances went on, exciting the joy of this little population which was progressing towards future unity and a harmonious mutual understanding.

But among all this triumphant feeling of fraternity there was one man, a patriarch, the foreman of the blast-furnace, Morfain, who stood apart, silent and resentful, neither willing nor able to understand. He still lived like some prehistoric Cyclops in his cave among the rocks near the blast-furnace of which he still had charge. He lived there alone now, like a recluse who wished to have nothing to do with present times, having broken off all relations with the rising generation. When his daughter Ma Bleue had left him to share the lot of André Gourier, the Prince Charming of her dreams, he had begun to feel that these new times were getting the better of him. Then another love affair carried off his son Petit-Da, that splendid fellow, that vigorous giant, who had become desperately enamoured with the daughter of Caffiaux, the grocer and liquor dealer. She was Honorine, a little brunette, active and lively. Morfain had at first vehemently refused to consent to their marriage, for he was full of contempt for such a family of poisoners as the Caffiaux, disreputable people, and they equally treated with repugnance and disdain the idea of giving their daughter to a manual laborer. However, Caffiaux was the first to surrender; for he was always far-seeing, and keenly alive to his own interests. He had obtained, after closing his drinking-place, an excellent position in the general stores at La Crêcherie as chief superintendent, and old stories to his discredit were forgotten. From that time he professed his entire devotion to the cause of association, and would not obstinately persist in a refusal which might have been to his own disadvantage. Then Petit-Da resolved to act contrary to his father's will, and to be

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married without his consent. A terrible quarrel took place between the two men; and ever after the foreman of the foundry, clinging to his rocks, lived but to work his furnace, an immovable and threatening ghost come out of long-past ages.

Years and years passed, but old Morfain seemed to grow no older. He continued to be the master and conqueror of fire—a giant with red hair, an eagle nose, and eyes of flame shining between cheeks that fire seemed to have dried up. His distorted mouth, which was never opened for speech, looked as if it retained marks of severe burning. Nothing appeared to interest him that was connected with other people, buried as he was in the savage isolation in which he entrenched himself when he found that his son and daughter were going the way of progress like others. Ma Bleue and Achille had had a charming little daughter, Léonie, who was growing in grace and sweetness. Petit-Da and Honorine had a fine boy called Raymond, an intelligent lad, now nearly old enough to be married. But the grandfather would not be softened; he would have nothing to do with these children; he would not even see them. As far as he was concerned they seemed to belong to another world; he did not care for them. On the contrary, now that all his human affections had been crushed, a sort of parental love that he had always felt for his blast-furnace seemed to increase. It was his giant child, a monster ever groaning with perpetual fires, which he took charge of day after day and hour after hour. The least derangement in this furnace, when the tappings lost their brilliancy, distressed him exceedingly. He would spend wakeful nights watching the *tuyères* to see that they worked properly, devoting himself to his furnace as a young man might have done to his love, in fiercest flames which did not seem to affect his seasoned skin. Luc, after having spoken of putting him on the retired list because of his great age, had not the heart to do so, foreseeing the terrible revolt, the inconsolable grief of this hero of painful labor, who was so proud of having his muscles consumed and burned up in his obscure task as

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the conqueror of fire. But the inevitable hour of his retirement came, for the evolution of progress could not be stayed, though Luc had the compassionate kindness to put off the inevitable.

But Morfain felt himself no longer in security. He knew that the learned labors of Jordan tended to replace the blast-furnace, so ponderous, slow, and barbarous, with its infernal fire so difficult to control, by the light, manageable batteries of electric furnaces. The idea that they would extinguish and demolish the colossus which he had never suffered to stop working for seven or eight years overwhelmed him. He informed himself, and became uneasy as soon as he knew that Jordan had made his first step forward by burning coal as it came up out of the mine under the boilers of great machines, and then conducting electricity to La Crêcherie by means of cables without any loss whatever. But as the net cost of this improvement was still very high, it was not possible profitably to employ electric power to smelt iron. Morfain rejoiced in the inutility of the victory. For ten more years the unsuccessful experiments of Jordan were very gratifying to him; he was silently ironical, for he felt that fire would be able to defend itself, and would never suffer defeat from this new power, this mysterious lightning which made no flash. He wished for the defeat of the owner of La Crêcherie, for the destruction of his new appliances, which day by day were becoming improved more and more. And at last, on a sudden, the rumor grew worse. It was said that Jordan had at last realized his great idea. He had discovered how to transform the caloric energy contained in coal into electric energy without making it pass through mechanical energy — in other words, he could do it without a steam-engine, that costly and cumbersome intermediary. Thus the problem was solved; the net price of electricity could be lowered one-half; it could be employed to smelt iron ore. The means of producing this power were at once set to work; a battery of electric furnaces had been put up, and Morfain in despair walked round and round his blast-furnace, with

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a fierce, hard look as if he were going to die in its defence.

Still Luc did not at once give the order to put out the blast-furnace, for he wanted to make conclusive experiments with the electric battery. During nearly six months smelting by fire and electricity proceeded side by side, and it was a most painful time to the old master-founder, for he felt that the new power would end by destroying the giant under his charge which he so dearly loved. He saw it neglected by every one; no one came up to look at it. Curious, happy people crowded round those electric furnaces below, which took up so little space, and did their work, it was said, so well and so promptly. Morfain, full of violent rancor, would not even go down to look at these new inventions, which he treated as playthings fit only for children. Was it possible that the old method, of free, bright fire, which had given men the sovereignty of the earth, could ever be dethroned? They would come back to it—to those gigantic furnaces which had been blazing, and never going out, for ages. And in his solitude with a few men of his gang, as silent as himself, he was satisfied day after day to look down upon the shed under which the electric furnaces were operating, happy even at night when he lighted up the horizon with his brilliant tappings.

But at last a day came when Luc signed the death-warrant of the blast-furnace, having fully ascertained by experiments how much less onerously its work thenceforth could be done. It was settled that it should be allowed to go out, and that it should be demolished after it had been tapped for the last time. When Morfain was told this he said nothing, but received it passively, with a set face, which gave no indication of the tumult in his soul. Others were frightened by this unnatural calm. Ma Bleue went up to see her father, taking with her her grown daughter Léonie, while Petit-Da, with the same loving thought, took up his tall son Raymond. For once, as it had been in old times, the family was gathered together in the cave in the rocks, the gigantic father between his

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blue-eyed daughter and his giant son, who had come under the progressive influences of a later day; and there was also a lovable, little, beautiful granddaughter and a little grandson of great intelligence, incarnations of the ideas of a new generation, whose aim was human happiness. Their grandfather allowed them to kiss him and to caress him without repulsing them, which he had never done before. Though he had sworn he would never see them, he suffered them this time to cling around him. But he did not return their caresses. He seemed like some hero of the past whose interest in his race was dead. All this happened upon one dark and cold autumn day, about dusk, when a crêpe veil was falling from the heavens and spreading blackness over the earth. Then he rose, and broke his long silence by saying:

"I must go. They are waiting for me to superintend the last tapping."

It was the last. They all followed him up to the blast-furnace. The men of the gang were there, half hidden in the darkness and awaiting his arrival. It was the usual work. The long bar was driven into the plug of fire-clay, the tap-hole was made larger, and finally the tumultuous outflow of molten metal ran along the trenches and entered the moulds.

Once more from those furrows of fire came an incessant outburst of sparks—blue sparks, bright and delicate, amid golden rockets, like blue corn-flowers among golden spikes of wheat. A blinding light in the dusk illuminated the blast-furnace, the neighboring buildings, the roofs of Beauclair in the distance, and the far horizon. Then all was extinguished, and darkness reigned. It was the end. The blast-furnace was no more.

Morfain, who had looked on without saying one word, stood in the dark like one of the great rocks of the vicinity that night had just rendered invisible.

"Father," said Ma Bleue, softly, "now that there is no more work for you up here, won't you come down to us? Your room has been ready this long while."

Petit-Da then said in his turn:

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"Father, this means that you want rest, and your room is ready for you in our house. You must divide yourself, and give half to each of your children."

But the old master-founder made no answer. A great sigh came from him, and ended in a groan. Then he said:

"All right. I will come down and see for myself. . . . But go away now."

For two weeks more Morfain could not be persuaded to leave the blast-furnace. He watched it slowly cooling, as if he were watching a dying man. He stayed by it late at night. He examined it every evening to make sure whether it were still living or dead. And when he felt a little warmth he obstinately hoped and watched over it like one who will not consign the remains of a friend to nothingness. But then came the men who were to pull down the furnace, and one morning Morfain was seen to quit his cave among the rocks and go down to La Crêcherie straight towards the shed which let in sunlight through its windows, where the battery of electric furnaces was in operation. He walked with the firm step of an old man who knows himself to be defeated but yet does not give in.

It happened that Jordan and Luc were both there, and Petit-Da, who was busy superintending the working of the apparatus, assisted by his son Raymond, who was already a good electrician. The operation had still to be regulated day by day, and that was why Jordan would not quit the shed, since he desired to render perfect a method that had cost him many long years of research and experiment.

"Ah! my old Morfain," cried he, joyfully. "So here you are, and at last you are reasonable!"

But with an unmoved face the old hero only answered:

"Yes, Monsieur Jordan, I wished to see your machine."

Luc, rather uneasy, looked at him earnestly, for he had set a watch over him, owing to his having heard that he had been seen leaning over the mouth of the blast-furnace, still full of live coals, with the look of a man who was thinking of jumping into the frightful hell below him.

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One of his gang had saved him from this death—from giving his body as a last token of affection to this monster. It seemed as if he wanted to perish by fire—the element he had loved and served faithfully for fifty years.

"That's right, my good Morfain, to want to see all you can at your age," said Luc, without taking his eyes off him. "Look at these pretty playthings."

The battery of ten furnaces extended in a line — ten cubes of red bricks, two metres in height and one metre and a half in width. And all that could be seen above them was the armature of the powerful electrodes and thick cylinders of carbon to which were attached the cables that conducted electricity. The operation was very simple. An endless screw which was controlled by a button did duty for the ten furnaces, and conveyed the ore and emptied it into each of them. Another button established a current, the arc formed by which, of the extraordinary temperature of two thousand degrees, was capable of melting two hundred kilogrammes of metal in five minutes. All that was necessary was to turn a third button, when the door of platinum closing each furnace would open, and then a sort of rolling platform covered with fine sand began to start with ten pigs, each two hundred kilogrammes in weight, which were carried off to cool in the open air.

"Well, my good Morfain," said Jordan, with the delight of a happy child, "what have you got to say about that?"

Then he explained the rendering. Those "playthings" yonder smelted two hundred kilogrammes every five minutes, say two hundred and forty tons a day, when run for but ten hours.

This was a prodigious rendering, especially when the fact was taken into consideration that the old blast-furnace, burning day and night, never yielded one-third of such a product. For this reason the electric furnaces were rarely operated more than three or four hours; and then there was the advantage that they could be extinguished and relighted, according to requirements, in or-

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der to obtain from them the desired quantity of raw material. And how easy it all was, and how clean and simple! There was scarcely any dust, since the electrodes themselves furnished the carbon necessary for the carburization of the ore. Some gas, indeed, escaped, but there was so little slag that it was easily got rid of by daily cleaning. There was no longer any barbarous colossus, whose digestion occasioned so much disquietude; no longer any of those members with which it had been necessary to surround it, such as purifiers, heaters, and blast-engine; and no longer any continual current of water. The belly was no longer threatened with clogging or cooling. When a *tuyère* was operating badly, there was no longer any talk of demolishing everything in order to empty the monster while in full blast. A small army, consisting of feeders watching at the mouth and founders ramming the clay plug and roasting themselves in the flames of the tappings, was no longer on the alert to divide itself into day and night shifts. The battery of ten electric furnaces, fifteen metres in length by five in width, with its rolling platform, stood at ease in the great glazed shed that housed it. Three children would have sufficed to set it in operation—one at the button of the endless screw, another at the button of the electrodes, and a third at the button of the rolling platform.

"What have you got to say about it?—what have you got to say about it, my good Morfain?" repeated Jordan, who was triumphing.

The old master-founder gazed earnestly at what was before him. He spoke not a word; he made no gesture. It was growing dusk; the shed was becoming dark, and the operation of the battery was remarkable for its mechanical regularity. The ten furnaces, cold and dark, seemed to be asleep, while the little carts of ore, moved by the endless screw, were emptying themselves one by one. Then every five minutes the platinum doors were opened; the ten white jets from ten smeltings dispelled the darkness, and the ten pigs of iron, blossoming like blue-bottles amid spikes of gold, were carried away upon the rolling plat-

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form with a slow motion. To any one who stood watching it the spectacle was extraordinary when the shed was lighted up at regular intervals by these sudden brilliant illuminations.

Petit-Da, who till then had remained silent, now wanted to make some explanations. He pointed to the great cable which conducted the electric current and descended from the rafters.

"See, father, the electricity is brought by that, and it has such power that if its strands were broken everything would be blown up as if by a stroke of lightning."

Luc, seeing Morfain so calm and quiet, grew less anxious, and began to laugh.

"Don't say that," he said; "you will frighten people. Nothing would be blown up; the imprudent person who meddled with the wires would be the only one hurt; and, besides, the cable is very strong."

"Ah! yes—so it is," said Petit-Da; "it would take a tremendous grip to break it."

Morfain, who had said nothing, had quietly drawn near, and now he had only to lift his arms above his head to grasp the cable. He stood motionless for a few moments, but on his dried-up face nothing could be read. Suddenly such a flame seemed to shoot from his eyes that Luc again grew anxious, dreading some catastrophe.

"You think it would need a strong grip?" said Morfain, breaking silence. "Let's see about that, my boy."

And before there was time for any one to stop him he had seized the cable in both hands — those hands long hardened by fire and like iron pincers. He twisted it, and broke it by one superhuman effort, just as an angry giant would break the string of a child's toy. Then came a flash of lightning; the wires had been touched; a dazzling flash of light shot into the darkness. Then all the shed was plunged again into darkness. All that was heard, for nothing could be seen, was the heavy fall of some large body. The grand old man, thunderstricken, had fallen prone like some great tree.

It was necessary to run for lanterns. Jordan and Luc,

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who had been thrown down by the shock, could hardly believe the old man was dead. Petit-Da sobbed and screamed. The old master-founder, stretched at full length on his back, seemed scarcely to have suffered, so hardened had he been by flames that fire could hardly injure him. His clothes were burning, and had to be extinguished. No doubt he had been unwilling to survive the monster he had loved—that antique blast-furnace whose last adherent he was. With him ended the first great struggle of progress—man subduing fire, conquering metals, bending under the slavery of a toil too hard for him, but exulting in having nobly borne the burden which had weighed so heavily on mankind in its march towards future happiness. He had even declined to know anything about the new ways of progress, which, thanks to the victory of a just reward of labor, brought to every one a little rest, a little joy, a little enjoyment, such as formerly belonged only to the privileged classes, thanks to the unrighteous suffering of those beneath them. Morfain perished like a fierce, obstinate hero of the old, terrible system of labor, a Vulcan chained to his forge, the blind foe of all who would have set him free, glorying in his servitude, believing that when suffering and human toil were lessened it was a proof that the world was going wrong. The new power of the new age, the thunder and lightning whose potency he had denied and derided, had destroyed him. And he slept.

A few years later three more marriages took place which tended still more to cement classes and draw closer the ties of fraternity and peace among the people. The eldest son of Luc and Josine, Hilaire Froment, a stout fellow twenty-six years of age, married Colette, the daughter of Nanet and Nise. Thus the blood of the Delaveaus mingled with that of the Froments and of that Josine who had been picked up in the streets by Luc, so wretched, so hungry, and so miserable, at the gates of the Pit, now long passed away. Then another Froment, Thérèse, Luc's third child, tall, handsome, and happy, married when she was seventeen Raymond, who was two years older than

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herself, the son of Petit-Da and Honorine Caffiaux; and this time the descendants of Luc became allied to those of Morfain, the hero of the old system of labor, and to those of Caffiaux, whose former trade Luc and La Crêcherie had destroyed. Then Léonie, at twenty, the daughter of Achille Gourier and Ma Bleue, married a son of Bonnaire, the same age as herself; he was Severin, Lucien's younger brother. Thus the expiring *bourgeoisie* became allied with the class of working-people, the class of rough toilers who had accepted their place in life with resignation in past ages, while other revolutionary workers were planning how to deliver them.

Great *fêtes* took place on the occasion of these marriages. The descendants of Luc and Josine were about to increase and multiply, and aid to populate the city founded by Luc for the sake of Josine, and of all people who, like her, could be saved from blighting poverty. Thus the stream of love and life grew ever longer; harvests and population increased; more and more men grew up to promote truth and righteousness. Victorious Love, ever gay and ever young, made his way into families, and paired off young couples throughout the city, promoting harmony and happiness everywhere; and every marriage made an increase in the city, because in the green gardens rose another little house. The number of white houses went on ever increasing, until at last the city invaded and swept away old Beauclair, its old unsanitary quarter and its filthy abodes where labor had been slowly perishing for ages. This was pulled down, but it had before that been made more healthy. It was replaced by wide streets, planted with trees, and on each side rose pleasant houses. Then the *bourgeois* quarter felt itself in danger. New streets enabled old buildings to be turned to new uses. The sub-prefecture, the court-house, and the prison were demolished, but the old church still stood, crumbling slowly to pieces, in the middle of a little open space neglected and deserted and overgrown with nettles and bushes. Old family mansions and houses of pretension gave place everywhere to more fraternal and healthful buildings, that

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stood in the great garden which all the town was becoming; and all had abundance of light and of pure water. So the new city was founded—a large and glorious city, the sunny avenues of which stretched out farther and farther, until at last they spread between the nearest fields of the fertile plain of Roumagne.

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III

TEN more years passed, and love which had paired young men and girls, love the conqueror, love that fecundates the human race, gave birth to many children who were growing up in happy households, and giving promise of more love and happiness in the future. In each new generation it seemed likely that more truth, righteousness, and peace would expand and reign in the world.

Luc, who was now sixty-five years of age, became, as he grew older, more and more attached to children; his love for them seemed a passion. Now that he had satisfied his aspirations as the builder of a city, the creator of a people, now that he saw the city such as he had conceived it, founded and flourishing, his first thought was of the generation growing up to live in it. He looked after the smallest children; he gave them his time, feeling that the future lay with them. They, and the children of their children, and still more the future children of their children, he trusted would some day form a people wise and good, which might accomplish all that he had dreamed of truth and justice. It is not possible to regenerate grown men who have been brought up in habits and beliefs to which they have been enslaved by heredity. It is only children who can be acted upon, by freeing them from false ideas and assisting them to grow up and to progress according to the natural evolution of the instincts they were born with. And Luc felt that each successive generation ought to make one step at least in advance, thus creating a certainty of progress on its march towards peace and happiness. So he was in the habit of saying with a laugh that children were to be the con-

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querors, the strongest and most victorious of his little community on the march.

In his long morning inspections, which twice a week he continued to make of his work, the best part of his time and his heart were given to the schools, and even to the *crèches,* where the babies were cared for. He generally began with them before going to the workshops and stores. He enjoyed seeing his laughing, healthy flock of little ones, merry and awake since the rising of the sun. As he changed the days of his inspection and encouragement every week, he came when he was not expected. He would drop in delighted at the surprise he created among these noisy little people, who all adored him and looked upon him as their kind and merry grandpapa.

On one Tuesday morning he was going to pay his visit to his "dear children," as he always called them, and was walking towards the school at about eight o'clock. It was a glorious spring morning. The sunshine fell like a golden flood on the green grass, and he was slowly passing down one of the avenues when he stopped, for he heard a voice he loved calling him as he passed the house where the Boisgelins lived. The call was from Suzanne. She had seen him pass, and had come out to the garden gate.

"Oh! I beg you, my dear friend, to come in a moment. That poor man has another attack, and I am very uneasy."

She was speaking of Boisgelin, her husband. For a little while he had tried to work, because he had got tired of doing nothing, of being a drone in this busy hive which hummed with the labor and activity of all the others. His idleness became at last too much for him. Hunting and riding on horseback did not completely fill his time. So Luc, at Suzanne's suggestion, in hope of aiding his conversion, had given him a minor position as inspector in the general stores. But a man who has never made any use of his hands, and has been lazy from his birth, has no power of will, and cannot conform to rules of method and order. Boisgelin soon found himself incapable of any regular occupation. His brain seemed useless; his

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limbs ceased to obey him; he was inert and somnolent, and he succumbed after frightful suffering, in which he realized his utter impotence. He suffered too much, and gradually fell back into the void of his old existence, into his days of laziness; time passed without effecting any good. But having no longer the excitement of luxury and pleasure, he was the victim of *ennui*—a terrible feeling which grew worse and worse, and from which he saw nothing to deliver him. He was growing old now, and was stupefied, bewildered by things he had never foreseen, extraordinary events that were passing around him, and he felt as if he had fallen from another sphere.

"Are his attacks violent?" asked Luc of Suzanne.

"Oh no," said she; "he is merely very melancholy and very suspicious, and my uneasiness is due to the fact that his folly is again getting possession of him."

Boisgelin's mind, indeed, seemed to be clouded in consequence of the idle life that he was leading in this city of activity and labor. From morning to night he might be seen, like a phantom of idleness, wandering about the busy streets, through the noisy schools, and through resounding workshops; obliged at every step to be on his guard against being trodden underfoot or carried away. He was the only human being at La Crêcherie who did nothing; all the others were busy, active, full of health and joy. He had not become acclimated, but had gone astray in this new world, and it gradually became his delusion, as he found himself the only man who was not working among this crowd of workers, that he was the master and king, and that all around him were slaves, working solely for his profit and amassing enormous wealth, of which he was disposing as he pleased for his own enjoyment. When the old social system broke up, he still clung to the idea of capital. He fancied himself a capitalist who was supreme above all other capitalists on earth, and he looked upon all men as his slaves, who were to work for his selfish happiness.

Luc found Boisgelin standing outside of his house, dressed with the extreme care that he still continued to

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take of his person. At the age of seventy he was a self-satisfied old fop, with his air of vanity, his well-shaven face, and his single eye-glass. But his vacillating expression and weak mouth showed the decay of his mind. A cane was in his hand, and a tall hat was set lightly on his head a little over his ear; this equipment showed that he was thinking of going out.

"What! Are you up already? And going for a walk?" said Luc, who assumed an air of cordiality and good humor.

"I *must* go, my dear sir," replied Boisgelin, after a pause, in which he seemed to be suspiciously examining the speaker. "Every one seems to be cheating me. How can I remain tranquil with the millions a day that my money is bringing me and that these laborers are making for me? I want to look into the matter. I want to see how things are going on, and to make sure that hundreds of thousands of francs come safely into my purse."

Suzanne and Luc exchanged a gesture of despair. Then she spoke:

"I have been advising him not to go out to-day. What is the use of making all this fuss?"

But her husband silenced her.

"It is not merely the loss of the money made to-day," he said, "that troubles me; it is the disposition of all the money that has been amassed, the billions that a fresh million every day makes larger and larger. I am getting so that I hardly know myself. I don't see how I am to live, in view of this enormous fortune. I must invest it somewhere—don't you think so? Meantime I must watch over it, and see that I may be robbed of as little of it as possible. Oh! that involves work of which you have no idea, and is making me wretched—yes, it is worrying me to death. I am more wretched than the poor who have no bread and no fuel."

His voice began to tremble like that of a man in deep distress, and tears rolled down his cheeks. It was pitiful to see him; and Luc, who felt him to be an anomaly in his busy city, was moved to the depths of his heart.

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"Bah!" said he, "you ought to take a rest for one day. I think your wife is right. If I were you I would not go out to walk now. I would stay at home and see how the roses are growing in my garden."

Boisgelin, who mistrusted Luc, looked at him steadily. Then, as if feeling that he must give some one his confidence, and moved to do so by the sight of an old acquaintance whom he thought he could trust, he said:

"No, no. I must go out. What troubles me even more than the necessity of looking after my work-people is the safe investment of my fortune. I cannot tell what to do with all my money. Just think! billions! millions upon millions! Such an amount of money is embarrassing; there are no places I know of big enough to stow it. My notion is to go out and see if I cannot find some hole big enough to bury it. But don't say anything about this. Nobody must know."

And as Luc, horrified, turned again to Suzanne, who stood by pale and trying to repress her tears, Boisgelin took advantage of the moment to slip between them and make his escape. With rapid steps he passed down the sunny avenue and disappeared. Luc wanted to run after him and to bring him back by force.

"I assure you he frightens me," he said. "And I think you are wrong to let him go alone wherever he may please. I don't know why, but I never can meet him roaming about at the schools, or in the stores, or in the workshops without dreading some misfortune, some catastrophe—I could not say of what nature."

He had felt this uneasiness for a long time, and this was the first opportunity he had had to speak of it to Suzanne. Nothing was more painful to him than the sight of this ghost out of the past, this old man who had lost his reason, who had fallen into second childhood, exhibiting the wreck that mad laziness and luxury had made of him to his people, who were aiming at progress. When he met Boisgelin, like a protest out of the past, he watched him anxiously, and was painfully affected by the restlessness of this man, who had wandered out of

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the track of his old life and could not acclimatize himself.

But Suzanne tried to reassure him:

"I assure you that he is harmless," said she. "It is only on his own account that I tremble. There are times when I see him so gloomy, so miserable, so borne down by the weight of all that money that he fancies himself to possess, that I grow afraid that he may make away with himself. But how do you think I could make him stay at home? He is happy only when out-of-doors. It would be useless cruelty. He never speaks to any one when he is abroad; he seems as shy and apprehensive as some poor child who is playing truant."

The tears she had been trying to restrain began to fall.

"Ah! poor fellow; he has caused me much suffering, but never till now so much anxiety and pain."

Then, when she found that Luc was going to the schools, she said she would accompany him. She, too, had grown older, and was now sixty-eight, but she was still slender, light on her feet, and very active, loving to interest herself in others, and to spend her time and strength in good works. Since she had been living at La Crêcherie, and her son Paul, who was married and had several children, no longer occupied her, she had created for herself a large family, having become an instructress — a mistress in singing, teaching the rudiments of music at the schools in the primary class of little children. This helped her to live happily. It delighted her to awaken a sense of music in those pure little souls, and hear the children singing with all their hearts. She was a good musician, but her aim was not to give these children science. She wished rather to make them sing as birds do in the woods —like creatures who live free and gay—and she had obtained some marvellous results. Her class seemed like an aviary full of song-birds. All the children when they came out of her hands filled other classes with singing, so that in the school, workshops, and, indeed, in the whole city there was constant happy warbling.

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"But you do not have your class to-day?" remarked Luc.

"No, but I am going to profit by their playtime to make them rehearse a chorus, the little angels! And, besides, there are several matters to be settled with Josine and Sœurette."

These three had become great friends, and were almost inseparable. Sœurette had never given up the management of the principal nursery, where she watched over a little crowd of children, some in the cradle and some who could not yet walk. As for Josine, she had put herself at the head of the sewing-school and the housekeeping department, that all the girls who left the school might be fitted to make good wives, good mothers, and good housekeepers. Besides this, the three formed a sort of council where all questions were discussed that had reference to women in the new city.

Luc and Suzanne walked together down the avenue, and came out on the large square in which stood the Communal House, in the midst of green lawns bright with flowering shrubs and rustic flower-baskets. It was no longer the modest little edifice of earlier days, but a perfect palace had been built with a large polychrome façade, the decorated tiles of which were inserted into the iron frame-work to the delight of the eye. Great halls used as club-rooms and for games and theatricals were places where all people could take their ease, feel they were at home, and fraternize in frequent *fêtes* which interspersed their days of labor. As much as possible—apart from the family life that each one lived in the privacy of his own little home—it was thought good that public life should be in common, all the inhabitants of the city living in sympathy with others' lives, that complete harmony and good feeling might flow from this companionship. That was why, though all the little houses were unpretentious, the Communal House was brilliantly luxurious, and was filled with things beautiful and all such conveniences as became the abode of the sovereign people. It seemed likely to become a town within the city, so continually did it grow under

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the pressure of the public need. Behind it there were other buildings—the libraries, the laboratories, lecture-halls, and halls for meetings — places where every one might receive free instruction, make researches and experiments for himself, and become acquainted with truths already attained. There were also yards and sheds for gymnastic exercises, to say nothing of an admirable arrangement of free baths, with plenty of pure, fresh water —the running water brought from the heights of the Monts Bleuses, which by its abundance insured health, cleanliness, and comfort to the great, growing population of the city. But, above all, the schools had become a little world; they now occupied separate buildings beside the Communal House, for several thousand children attended them. To avoid crowding, which is always prejudicial, they had been made into several divisions, each having its own detached building which opened on the gardens. It was a little town of youth and gladness, with children still in their cradles, up to great boys and girls who were going through their apprenticeship after having passed through the five classes that had given them book learning and other instruction.

"Oh!" said Luc, with his kindly smile, "I always begin at the beginning. I go first to see the little ones who are not yet weaned."

"Of course," said Suzanne, growing more cheerful. "So I will go in with you."

In this pavilion, the first to the right in the midst of the flowers of the garden, Sœurette reigned over about thirty cradles and as many little rolling-chairs. She also supervised other buildings in her neighborhood, but always came back to this one, where was Luc's little grandson and three of his little granddaughters, whom she adored. Luc and Josine, convinced that this plan of bringing up children in common was a good thing for the city, had set the example by desiring that their children's children should be brought up from their earliest days with other children.

Josine was now there with Sœurette. Neither was now

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young. The former was fifty-eight, the other sixty-five. But Josine had kept her natural grace, her delicate complexion, and her beautiful hair, for the gold of her locks had only grown somewhat pale; while Sœurette, as often happens to women plain, dark, and meagre in their youth, seemed hardly to have grown older. She had acquired a kind of charm of persistent youth, and her face beamed with active kindliness. Suzanne was older than these two, being sixty-eight, and carried her weight of years with smiling gayety. She had never been beautiful, but had only had the attraction of affectionate sweetness and intelligence softened by sympathetic kindliness. The three were to Luc three faithful friends—one his beloved wife, the two others devoted to him. When Luc came in, accompanied by Suzanne, Josine was holding on her lap a little boy barely two years old, whose little right hand Sœurette was examining carefully.

"What is the matter with my little Olivier?" asked Luc, anxiously. "Has he hurt himself?"

He was the last arrival in Luc's family circle—Olivier Froment, his grandson, the child of his eldest son Hilaire and of Colette, the daughter of Nanet and Nise. All the marriages we have recorded had borne fruit, and were filling La Crêcherie and its schools with an ever-increasing crowd of light and dark heads belonging to the little people who were growing up for the future.

"Oh!" said Sœurette, "it is only a slight scratch which he must have got from the little table in front of his chair. There! it is all right now."

The boy had uttered a little cry; then he began to laugh; but a little girl about four, just set at liberty, ran up to him with open arms, as if she wished to take him up and carry him off with her.

"Be so good as to leave him alone, Mariette!" cried Josine, who was alarmed. "You must not think your little brother is your doll."

Mariette protested, and said she would be very good, and Josine, like a kind grandmother, looked up at Luc, who was smiling, and both smiled; both were so happy at

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having these little folks growing up around them. Suzanne meanwhile brought them two other fair children—Hélène and Berthe—four-year-old twins. They were the children of Pauline, Luc's second daughter. She had married André, whose paternal grandfather was Judge Gaume, who had brought him up after the death of his father, Captain Jollivet, and the disappearance of his mother. Luc and Josine had already married three of their five children—Hilaire, Thérèse, and Pauline, and two more were as yet only engaged; these were Charles and Jules.

"And these little darlings—are you going to overlook them?" said Suzanne, gayly. "Besides, you have asked nothing yet about Maurice, the son of your Thérèse, that big fellow nine years old, who has the voice of an angel, and who is going to rehearse with me presently."

The twins, Hélène and Berthe, had clung round Luc's neck, for they adored him. Mariette also wanted her share of him, and climbed upon his lap, while Olivier, the baby, whose hands were now all right, stretched out his little fists in a frenzy of entreaty that grandpapa would lift him on his shoulder. Luc, half stifled by these caresses, but greatly pleased by them, said, laughing:

"Oh! my dear friend, if you call Maurice there will be five of them all wanting to eat me up. Good heavens! what will become of me when they get to be dozens!"

And setting down the twins and Mariette, lovely children with rosy cheeks and clear bright eyes, he took up Olivier, and, tossing him high in the air, made him utter shouts of rapture. Then, after replacing him in his chair, he said:

"Now let us all be sensible. We cannot play all the time. I must attend to something else."

Then guided by Sœurette, and followed by Josine and Suzanne, he walked round all the halls. It was a pretty sight to see these houses full of baby life, with white walls, white cradles, and their little population all in white — everything so clean and pure and bright in the gay sunshine which streamed through the tall windows.

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There was plenty of running water in the place; its crystalline freshness could be felt. It could be heard flowing, as if a brook were kept on purpose to have everything absolutely clean, for cleanliness was the rule of the place even for the humblest utensils. Everything seemed to smell of soap and water and of health. Though now and then a cry was heard from one of the cradles, there were, in general, no sounds but baby prattle and silvery laughter from the children who were beginning to walk, and who filled the halls like a little flock of birds. Playthings, a little voiceless crowd, were everywhere — dolls, jumping-jacks, and wooden horses and wagons. These toys belonged to all, to the girls as well as to the boys, all members of one family, growing up together, from the time they were in long-clothes, as brothers and sisters, to be eventually husbands and wives; and, until death should part them, lead the same lives in the companionship of each other.

Luc would often stop and exclaim: "Oh! what a pretty little girl! What a fine little boy!" And if he mistook the sex of any baby, he would laugh at having called the little girl a boy, or *vice versa.*

"Ha!" said he, stopping before one of the cradles; "have you got another pair of twins? What lovely children—so exactly alike, so delicately beautiful!"

"No, no!" cried Sœurette, much amused. "That's a little girl whom the little boy in the next cradle has come over to visit. They take every chance of being together. We sometimes find three or four in the arms of one another!"

All grew delighted at the thought of this harvest of love and mutual affection which was growing up in these nurseries to ripen hereafter. Suzanne, who at first had shown a good deal of alarm and even repugnance at having training and education imparted to both sexes in common, was now astonished at the good results that had been obtained. Girls and boys had formerly been allowed to be together till they were seven or eight years old, but were then separated, so that they grew up in ignorance of

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one another, a wall being built up between them, and thus they were too often mere strangers, until marriage threw the woman into the man's arms. Their brains were hardly those of beings of the same race; mystery exasperated the sensual instinct, and their interests were different. Under the new system Suzanne saw peace established between them, with a closer fusion of intelligence, feeling, and reason, fruit of mutual understanding, and fraternity in love. But she was especially struck by the good results produced in the schools by co-education. It awakened a sort of fresh emulation, made the boys more gentle and the girls more self-reliant, and prepared them, through a thorough understanding and a free and entire knowledge, to blend and thereafter to form but one mind and one heart at the family fireside. None of the evil consequences that had been apprehended came to pass. The standard of morality was, on the contrary, higher than before. It was pleasant to see both boys and girls take up of their own accord such studies as were likely to be most useful to them, thanks to the liberty given to all pupils to choose special branches that might prove serviceable to them in after-life.

Suzanne said, laughing:

"Some seem to be betrothed in their cradles, and divorce will be done away with, for each pair will know one another too well to wed blindly. Come, my good Luc, now it is recreation-time, and I want you to hear my pupils sing."

Sœurette stayed with her babies, for it was time to bathe them, and Josine went to the hall where girls were taught sewing if they preferred to devote their play-hour thereto, for many were delighted to make doll-clothes. Luc went with Suzanne along the corridor upon which opened the five class-rooms.

The classes became so crowded that it had been necessary to subdivide them, to construct larger rooms, and also to enlarge the gymnasia and apprentice-shops and the gardens in which the children had their play-time every two hours. After some uncertainty, the method

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of instruction and education had been settled, and the system of teaching which made study attractive by letting the pupil to some degree follow his own bent, requiring on his part only his best effort to learn the lessons he had chosen, gave excellent results, and every year sent forth into the city a new generation fitted to promote more truth and righteousness. It was the right way—the only way—to cultivate good for the future, to bring up the men who would be needed on the morrow, free from false dogmas, brought up to accept only realities, instructed in such scientific facts as had been proved and accepted as certainties.

Formerly nothing had seemed better than to place a whole class under the ferule of a strict master, who exerted himself to force his own views and his own will on fifty pupils of different intellectual capacities. It now seemed more natural to awaken in each student a desire to acquire knowledge, then to direct him in his discoveries, and to encourage such individual faculties as each might manifest. The five classes had thus become a sort of field of experiment, in which children in a sort of graduated way roamed over various branches of human knowledge, not that they might be crammed with what they could not digest, but that there might be aroused in each an interest in what was adapted to his intellectual capacity. Thus each might be allowed to absorb what commended itself to his comprehension, so that he might be enabled to decide what specialty he should take up in his future career. Never had the saying "You must learn to know how to learn" seemed more true than in this system. It aimed at clearing young brains; it aimed at giving every young person his choice among an immense number of subjects, and in the end put to practical use all his intelligence and all his energy. And that object was accomplished, thanks to an interest created in study, thanks to the wholesome liberty of choice accorded to each student, and to the constant play-hours, full of activity and delight, which broke into his hours of hard brain-work.

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Luc and Suzanne had to wait a moment until the classes were dismissed. From the corridor along which they were slowly walking they could glance into the great schoolrooms, where each pupil had his own little table and chair. They had given up long tables and benches, that every child might have his things to himself. But what a gay sight it was, boys and girls sitting together as chance placed them! And what eager attention they all paid to the master who was standing in the midst of them, or walking from one to the other, talking his lesson, as it were, ready to answer questions or to receive contradictions sometimes. As there were neither rewards nor punishments, all were inspired by a desire to gain credit, by showing how much more than others he had understood. Often the master invited those to talk whose minds he knew were full of the subject, and thus the class kept up a constant interest in the discussions. All means were tried to make the pupils take a living interest in their studies, to draw them away from the dead letter of books and invite them to feel a personal enthusiasm for the ideas that they were being taught. What pleasure there was in beginning to learn and to know, as the five classes saw spread out before them all human knowledge, like a real moving cosmorama of the whole great world, of which each one of us ought to know something, in order to act his part in it and to be happy.

There was a joyous clamor in the schools. It was playtime. It was a pleasant sight to see the tumult when the classes rushed out, boys and girls all brotherly and good friends with each other. They always seemed to keep together; games were played by both sexes without distinction; some preferred talking, others went into the gymnasium or into the apprentices' workshops. There was much gay and genial laughter. There was only one play that is popular among French children that was discouraged, and that was one called *le petit mari et la petite femme,* for these children were as yet but playfellows and comrades. The time might come when they would begin to love and wish to know each other more intimately. A

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very handsome boy, nine years old, very sturdy and strong, threw himself into Luc's arms, crying:

"Good-morning, grandfather!"

It was Maurice, the son of Thérèse Froment, who had married a Morfain, Raymond, son of Petit-Da, the splendid giant, and Honorine Caffiaux.

"Ah!" said Suzanne, gayly, "now I have got my singing bird, with his voice like that of a little angel. Hush, children, won't you? We are going to sing our pretty song and chorus on this lawn under these great chestnut-trees."

The whole band in a moment gathered round her. Among the twenty there were two boys and a girl whom Luc tenderly kissed: Ludovic Boisgelin, nearly eleven, was the son of Paul Boisgelin and Antoinette Bonnaire, that first marriage in which love was conqueror, the first annunciation of the fusion of classes that was soon to be so common; Félicien Bonnaire, now fourteen, was the son of Séverin Bonnaire and of Léonie, the daughter of Achille Gourier and Ma Bleue, the pair who had sought each other out among the wild and fragrant rocks of the Monts Bleuses; Germaine Yvonnot, now sixteen, was the granddaughter of Auguste Laboque and Marthe Bourron, the daughter of their son Adolphe and Zoé Bonnaire—she was a handsome child, dark and merry; in her veins flowed the blood of the workman, the peasant, and the retail tradesman, classes so long and bitterly at war with one another; and it amused Luc to disentangle the skein of these various alliances, running continually one into the other. He enjoyed himself in the midst of all these curly heads, and was delighted to find himself among such a swarm of children sprung from these marriages, who were now peopling his city.

"Now you shall hear them sing," said Suzanne. "They are going to sing a hymn to the rising sun, a child's salutation to the orb that ripens the harvest."

On the lawn, among the great chestnut-trees, about fifty children were assembled. And the song rose fresh and joyous. It showed no great musical science. It was

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a simple alternation of verses, sung by a little girl and little boy, each verse followed by a chorus. But it was so lively and showed so much belief in the blessedness of the great source of light and heat that the shrill, sharp, childish voices had a touching charm. Little Maurice Morfain, who sang the alternate solo with Germaine Yvonnot, had, indeed, as Suzanne said, the voice of an angel—a voice of crystalline clearness like the upper notes of a flute. And then came the warbling of the choir, like the voices of birds chirping among the branches. Nothing could have been more charming.

Luc laughed like a kind, pleased grandfather, and Maurice, proud of his performance, came rushing into his arms.

"It is no more than the truth, my little man, that you sing like a nightingale. And that is a good and charming thing, because all through life, you see, you will be able to sing whenever you are sad, and that will give you courage. You must never cry when you are in trouble—you must always sing."

"Ah! that is what I always tell them," cried Suzanne, with her tender bravery. "Everybody ought to sing. I teach them how to sing that they may sing here at school, and then in the shops, and after that wherever they may be their whole life long. A nation that sings is a people of health and joy."

She grew merry. She put no severity and no vanity into her teaching, but gave her lessons often in the garden, for her only ambition was to open the little hearts of her pupils to the happy influences of fraternal song and to the great beauty of harmony. As she said, her only wish was that the whole happy city, when righteousness and peace had been secured, might sing in the glad sunshine.

"Come, my little ones," she said, "try it again, and keep time. Don't hurry; we have plenty of leisure."

Again the song rose, but towards its end something troubled the singers. Behind the chestnut-trees, in a clump of bushes, a man suddenly appeared. He looked

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about him furtively, then he turned and hid himself. Luc had, however, recognized Boisgelin, and he was surprised at his singular proceedings, for he saw him stoop and examine the grass as if he were looking for some hole or hiding-place. Then Luc began to understand. The poor man, who was mad, must be anxiously looking for some secret hiding-place in which to deposit the great wealth he conceived himself to possess, and prevent it from being stolen. Very often people met him in the state he was now in, trembling with fear, uncertain in what deep hole he could bury this excess of fortune. The weight of it crushed him. Luc felt a sudden thrill of pity, especially when he saw the little ones frightened at the apparition, like a flock of happy birds driven off by the sudden appearance of a bird of prey.

Suzanne, though she turned pale, only said to her pupils, in à loud voice:

"Keep time—keep time, my darlings! Give out the last words with all your hearts."

Boisgelin, haggard and suspicious, disappeared like a black phantom among the flowering shrubs. And when the children, recovering themselves, had saluted the king of day with a last strain of thankfulness, Luc and Suzanne congratulated them on their performance, and dismissed them to their games. Then, when they found themselves together, both walked towards the workshops of the apprentices on the other side of the garden.

"Did you see him?" whispered she, after a silence. "Ah! poor man, what anxiety he gives me!"

And when Luc regretted that he had not tried to join Boisgelin and to take him home, she cried again:

"He would not have gone with you. You would have had to use force, and that would have made a scandal. I must repeat that my great fear is that he may be found some day with all his bones broken at the bottom of some chasm."

They again became silent, and finally reached the workshops where many pupils from the schools had been spending part of their play-time. Some had been engaged in

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sewing or embroidering, while others, in a plot of ground near the shops which had been given up to them, were digging, planting, and sowing.

They found Josine in a large hall full of sewing-machines, knitting-machines, and looms for weaving. These stood near together, and were watched over by boys and girls, for even after leaving school, schoolmates of both sexes kept together and shared life in common, engaging in the same work, and partaking the same pleasures. They had the same duties and the same rights, just as they had had in their school days. There was singing as they worked, each trying to do better than the rest in a spirit of joyous emulation.

"You hear how they are singing," said Suzanne, recovering her gayety. "They are forever singing—my singing birds."

Josine was showing a tall girl of sixteen, Clémentine Bourron, how to manage a sewing-machine, and make it do embroidery. And another little girl, not so old, for she was only nine, Aline Boisgelin, was waiting to be shown how to fell a seam by hand. Clémentine, who was the daughter of Sébastian Bourron and Agathe Fauchard, had poor Fauchard, the man who used to draw crucibles out of the furnaces, for her maternal grandfather, and for her paternal grandfather the puddler Bourron. Aline, the youngest sister of Ludovic, was the child of Paul Boisgelin and of Antoinette Bonnaire. She gave a little laugh of pleasure when she saw Suzanne, her grandmother, by whom she was adored.

"Oh! you know, grandmother, that I am not very good at felling seams, but I am beginning to do them nicely. Don't I, dear Josine?"

Suzanne kissed her, and then watched Josine turning down one end of the seam to show how it ought to be done. Even Luc got interested in these little matters, well knowing that nothing is without importance, that a happy life is made up of the happy employment of all hours, and by having all the capabilities of each human being utilized, for each must have his energies, physical and intel-

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lectual, so employed that they shall always be in their normal condition. And Sœurette having rejoined them just as he was about to part from Josine and Suzanne, he found himself for a moment in the flower-garden with these three women—the three loving and devoted souls who so greatly aided him to realize his dream of righteousness and kindliness.

They conversed for a few moments under the shade of the trees, settling the work that was to be done by each, and talking over plans. If their little flock was growing up so satisfactorily without many drawbacks, giving them each such a harvest of good results, they agreed that it was due to the system of their instructors, who did not recognize the presence of bad instincts in human beings, but only natural energies. Passions and instincts they held to be admirable and useful forces, if only directed to make other individuals of the community more happy.

It was Luc's theory that those we call bad men could have had their natural qualities trained to what is good and useful. Thus a man whose instincts are miserly can be trained to be prudent and economical. A man with a violent temper, an envious man, or a proud man can be turned into a hero who will make great sacrifices for the sake of glory.

In the school-rooms, in the apprentices' workshops, and from the very first moment of existence, they turned the natural instincts of each to serve some good purpose, instead of repressing them. Thus naturally idle children were treated as if they had been sick; their teachers tried to rouse in them emulation and to strengthen their will power by making them take pains to study subjects chosen by themselves — things that they could understand and love. The strength of the turbulent was utilized in hard work; the miserly showed a love of method; the proud and the jealous, who were generally endowed with much intelligence, liked to be able to triumph over others by accomplishing the most difficult tasks. Thus what the world had been taught to call "man's lower instincts" became fuel on the glowing hearth whence life derived its inex-

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tinguishable flame. All living forces were put to their proper uses, and all creation was regulated by the law of order, which flowed over human existence and conducted humanity towards the happy city.

"This is all as it should be," said Luc, when he had talked over the day's work with Josine, Suzanne, and Sœurette. "Go on as you are doing, my dear friends, and let your own hearts regulate the rest."

The three who stood beside him seemed like an emanation from the loving unity, the universal love that he wished to see diffused among his people. They took one another by the hand; they smiled upon him. Though they had now grown old, they were still beautiful with their soft white hair, beautiful with the beauty of kindliness and tender love.

The works, the halls, and shops had been enlarged, and all toil proceeded in healthful gayety induced by fresh air and sunshine. In all directions flowed streams of fresh water, cleansing the pavements and carrying away all dust, so that the scene of labor, once so black, so filthy, and so muddy, shone with cleanliness in all directions. Any one who entered these places found himself in a little town of order, joy, and riches. Machines were doing nearly all the labor. They were operated by electricity, and looked superb as they stood arranged in order, like an army of obedient workers, never tired, but always ready for fresh trials of strength. If their metal arms finally wore out they could be replaced. They felt no suffering, and had in part put an end to the suffering of human beings. These machines were something to be loved, not like the original machines, which increased competition and aggravated the poverty of the wage-earner by lowering prices, but machines that set men free, tools of the universe, working for man while he could take his rest. Around these sturdy workers there were employed only superintendents and those who ran them, and whose sole duty was to manœuvre starting-levers and to see to the proper working of the mechanism. The working-day was four hours, and no laborer worked at one thing more

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than two hours, when he was replaced by another workman, who handed over his task to another, he himself passing to other work—industrial, intellectual, or in some public function. As the general use of electric power did away with the great noise that formerly pervaded the halls, work now went on joyously to the sound of singing. The laborers had learned to sing in school, and now outbursts of harmony lightened their every-day existence. These men singing beside their great machines working so gently and quietly in silence and in the brightness of their copper and steel, showed what could be the joy of righteous labor, glorious labor, saving labor such as it had now become.

Luc, who had entered the puddling-furnace hall, stopped a moment to exchange a few friendly words with a tall lad about twenty, who sufficed to operate four furnaces.

"Well, Adolphe, are things going on all right? Are you satisfied?"

"Yes, indeed, Monsieur Luc. I have finished my two hours' work, and here is the ball ready to be taken from the furnace."

Adolphe was the son of Auguste Laboque and Marthe Bourron. But, unlike his maternal grandfather, who had now retired on a pension, he had nothing to do with the terrible task of rabbling in heat and flame the metal in fusion by means of the paddle. The rabbling was now done mechanically; a very ingenious system even extracted the sparkling ball and loaded it upon a car which carried it to the shingling-hammer without necessitating the intervention of a workman.

Then said Adolphe, pleasantly:

"I would like you to see it. Its quality is first rate, and then the work is all so simple and so pleasant."

He depressed a lever; the door was freed and opened, and out came the ball like a blazing star lighting up the horizon with its fiery train. The young man stood smiling. His face was fresh and fair, without a drop of sweat; his limbs were supple and finely formed; he was a man whose physique never would be impaired by fatigue. The

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car had gone to discharge its burden under the shingling-hammer, which was of a recent pattern, operated by electricity, and did all that had to be done without making the forgeman who had charge of it break his arms by turning and returning the iron in all directions. Its stroke was so clear and easy that it produced a music that made an accompaniment to the good humor of the workmen.

"I must hurry now," said Adolphe, after washing his hands. "I have to finish the model for a table that I am very much interested in, and shall do two hours' work in the carpenter's shop."

It was true he was both a puddler and a cabinet-maker, for he had learned several trades, as all the other boys had done, so that they might not be tied down to one narrow specialty. Work became a joy to them, a recreation, for it was always fresh and varied, passing from one thing to another every day.

"A pleasant time to you!" was Luc's farewell to him, for he was joyous at the young fellow's joy.

"Ah! yes, thank you, Monsieur Luc. That's the right word. Good work gives pleasure!"

But where Luc passed his pleasantest time that day was in the crucible-furnace hall. How far away he there felt himself from the hell that he had once seen, the crucible furnaces at the Pit, the blazing trenches, muttering like so many volcanoes, whence the wretched workmen in a reverberation of fire had to lift with main strength masses of one hundred pounds of metal in fusion. Instead of those dark, filthy, and dusty halls, there was now a long gallery lighted by large windows and paved with great flags, between which opened batteries of symmetrical furnaces. The use of electricity left them cold, silent, and very clean. In this place, also, machines were doing all the work of lowering the crucibles, raising them while hot and blazing, emptying them into the moulds, under the simple superintendence of the workmen. Even women were there, appointed to distribute the electric power, because they had been found to be more careful and accurate in the manipulation of apparatus of precision.

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Luc walked up to a tall, handsome girl of about twenty, Laure Fauchard, daughter of Louis Fauchard and Julienne Dacheux, who was standing beside an apparatus, and very attentively was sending the current to a furnace according to signs given to her by a young workman who was watching the fusion.

"Well, Laure," asked Luc, "you are not tired, I hope."

"Oh no, Monsieur Luc! it amuses me. How do you suppose that I could get tired turning this little hand-wheel?"

The young workman, who was Hippolyte Mitaine, now nearly twenty-three, had drawn near them. He was the son of Evariste Mitaine and Olympe Lenfant, and it was said that he was engaged to Laure Fauchard.

"Monsieur Luc," he said, "if you would like to see us cast some ingots, we are ready now."

And the machine, having been started, lifted the incandescent crucibles with quiet ease, and emptied them into the ingot moulds, which were brought up by mechanism one by one. In five minutes, while the work-people stood looking on, the operation had been properly performed, and the furnace was ready to receive a new charge.

"There now!" said Laure, with a hearty laugh; "I well remember all the dreadful stories that my poor grandfather Fauchard used to tell me when I was a little girl. He was a little off at that time, and was accustomed to tell things that made one shudder about the way he had to draw out such crucibles, and about how he had lived in a blaze all his life, his body and his limbs devoured by fire. All the old people think that we are very lucky now."

Luc had become grave, while his eyes became moist with emotion.

"Yes, yes," said he, "your poor grandfathers lived through much suffering. And that has resulted in better things for their grandchildren. If you do your work well, and love one another much, things will be better still for your sons and daughters."

Luc continued his inspection, and wherever he went, into the hall where steel was cast, or into that of the

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big forge, or into that of the large and small lathes, he found the same healthful cleanliness, the same gayety at work, the same singing, and the same easy, interesting labor, thanks to the diversity of tasks, the help of great machines and electricity. The workman, no longer a beast overladen with his burden, showed consciousness of his true place in life, and developed an intelligence at once untrammelled and glorious. And when Luc had ended his morning round by passing through the hall of the great rolling-mill, which was close to that of the puddling-furnaces, he stopped again to say a few kind words to a young fellow of about twenty-five—Alexandre Feuillat—who had just come in.

"Yes, Monsieur Luc," said the lad, "I have come straight from Combettes, where I am helping my father. We had to finish some sowing. I spent two hours at that, and now I am going to work two hours here, for there is an order for rails that are wanted immediately."

He was the son of Léon Feuillat and Eugénie Yvonnot. Being a fellow with an active imagination he amused himself, after he had worked his four regular hours, in making ornamental designs for the pottery shops of Lange.

But he set to work at once superintending a series of rolling-mills which were turning out rails. Luc, happy and kindly, watched him. Ever since electricity had been employed the horrible racket kept up by the rolling-mills had ceased. They now worked softly, as if well oiled, with no noise but that of a little silvery sound as each rail dropped upon the pile of others that lay cooling. The machines were incessantly producing what would tend to peace, would cross old frontiers, and make neighboring nations one great people, until the whole globe should be furrowed by their tracks. There were great steel ships—no longer abominable ships of war, carrying devastation and death, but ships of solidarity and fraternity, exchanging the products of continents, and increasing tenfold the wealth of mankind, and to such a point that abundance was now reigning everywhere. There were bridges also facilitating communications, and girders and the metallic

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frame-work needed for public buildings, such as communal houses, libraries, museums, asylums, immense co-operative storehouses, elevators, and granaries able to contain grain enough to feed all nations. Finally, there were innumerable machines, which in all places and for all purposes were taking the place of the arms of men, whether tillers of the soil or toilers in the workshop. Luc rejoiced at seeing all this iron used for pacific purposes. He looked on it as the conquering metal, long used to make swords and other weapons for men of blood, then in later years it had made cannon and shells, but now he was employing it to build houses for fraternity, justice, and happiness, peace in these last times having been attained.

Before he went home Luc thought he should like to glance at the battery that supplied the electric furnaces that had replaced the blast-furnace of Morfain. The battery was at work under a great shed with large glass windows lit up by the sun. The furnaces were filled every five minutes by means of machinery after the rolling platform had carried off ten pigs of iron, the brilliancy of which was lost in the brilliant rays of the sun. Two young girls were there, also, watching over the electric apparatus, both twenty, one very fair, Claudine, daughter of Lucien Bonnaire and Louise Mazelle, the other dark and splendid-looking, Céline, whose parents were Arsène Lenfant and Eulalie Laboque. As they were busy transmitting and cutting off the current, they could only smile at Luc. But then there was a pause, and they came up to him just as he saw a little group of children standing in the doorway and looking curiously into the shed.

"Good-morning again, my little Maurice," said he; "good-morning, little Ludovic; good-morning, my little Aline! So school is out, and you have come here to look on?"

Children were allowed during their play-hours to go all over the works, for it was thought they might thus gain some familiarity with the operations, while in school they were acquiring the rudiments of learning.

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Luc, glad to have his grandson Maurice with him, told them all to come in. He answered their many questions, and explained to them how the furnaces worked, and even operated the battery in order to show them how Claudine or Céline could turn a little lever and fuse the metal and make it flow forth in a dazzling stream.

"Oh, I know! I have seen all that before," said Maurice, with the importance of a little man who in nine years has seen more things than other people. "Grandfather Morfain one day showed me; but, tell me, Grandpa Froment, is it true that there were once furnaces as tall as the mountains, and that people had to scorch their faces day and night to get anything out of them?"

All began to laugh; but Claudine answered:

"That's quite true. Grandpapa Bonnaire often told me about it, and you ought to know the story, little Maurice, for your great-grandfather, Morfain the Great, as they still call him, fought fire to the last like a hero. He lived up yonder in a hole among the rocks. He never came down into the city, from one year's end to another, but watched his great furnace—a giant, a monster. You can still see its ruins on the side of the mountain, like those of some old donjon of past ages."

Maurice, with his round eyes staring with astonishment, felt the passionate interest in what Claudine was telling him that some children do in a fairy tale.

"Oh! I know—I know," he said. "Grandfather Morfain has told me about his father and the blast-furnace as tall as a mountain; but I fancied he was making it all up to amuse us, for he often invents stories when he wishes to make us laugh. Then it is all true?"

"Yes, quite true," said Claudine. "Up there there were workmen who filled up the furnace by emptying coal and ore into it from little carts, and down below there were other workmen who were all the time on the lookout and taking the greatest care that the monster should not have his stomach overloaded, and so have an indigestion which would have hindered him from doing his work properly."

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"Yes," said Céline, the other young girl, "and that went on for seven or eight years at a time. For seven or eight years the monster never had his fire put out, but was always flaming like the crater of a volcano, only sometimes they let his fire go down a little, for if he grew cool it was a great loss. They had to open his stomach while he was hot and clean his inside, and then almost build him over again."

"Now, then," said Claudine, "you understand, my little Maurice, that Morfain the Great, your great-grandfather, had a terrible time watching this fire for seven or eight years, to say nothing of his having also every five hours to open the tap-hole by means of a tapping-bar in order to run off the molten metal from the crucible in a genuine stream of fire that would have roasted you as a duck is roasted on a spit."

All at once the three children, who had been astonished up to that time, burst into a fit of laughter. "Oh! a duck roasting on the spit! think of great-grandfather Morfain being roasted like a duck!"

"Well!" said Ludovic Boisgelin, "it must have been poor fun to work in those days."

"Yes, indeed," said his sister Aline. "I am glad I was not born at that time. It is so amusing to work now."

But Maurice had grown serious. He seemed to be thinking and turning over in his little head the wonderful things that he had just heard. And he ended by saying:

"No matter! Great-grandfather Morfain must have been splendidly strong, and if things go on better nowadays it is perhaps because he worked so hard."

Luc, who up to that moment had contented himself with listening with a smile, was delighted at this wise remark. He lifted Maurice up and kissed him on both cheeks.

"You are right, my boy. And if you work with all your might now, your great-grandchildren may be still more fortunate. So you see even now that men are no longer roasted like ducks and that work has ceased to be painful."

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By Luc's order they had set the battery of the electric furnaces to work again. Claudine and Céline, by merely a slight movement, turned on or turned off the current. The furnaces were charged, the fusion proceeded, and every five minutes the rolling platform received the ten blazing pigs of iron, which it carried away. Then the children wanted to set the mechanism at work themselves; and what a delight it was to find this work so easy after the story that they had listened to about the toil of Morfain, which seemed to them like the sad labors of a mighty giant in some former world which has now disappeared.

But then appeared an apparition, and the children at once took flight in consternation. Luc saw Boisgelin again, standing at the door of the shed, gazing at them, and watching the work going on with the half-angry, suspicious look of a master who is continually apprehensive of being robbed by his men. He might often be seen thus in all parts of the works, bewildered that he could not inspect at once the enormous extent of the halls and the machinery, and becoming more and more excited at the idea of the millions he was losing somehow, day after day, because he was prevented from controlling the works and overlooking his workmen. They were so many now that he could not supervise them all. He succumbed under the weight of the enormous fortune, too great for him to look after. It was as if the skies had fallen on his head. He looked so haggard and worn out, as he idly walked about the works and watched the workers, he who had never in his life made use of his own hands, that Luc felt great pity for him, and was going to join him, in order to calm him and lead him back to his own home; but Boisgelin was on the alert, and rapidly vanished down the side of the great halls.

Luc's morning visit having been made, he went home. He could no longer inspect everything. Now that his city had grown so large, he merely walked over it in all directions. He was a creator resting from his work, and was delighted to see what he had begun growing larger

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day by day, as the houses and gardens of his city stretched into the plain beyond.

On the afternoon of that day, after he had given another glance at the general stores, he went to pass a quiet evening hour in the twilight with Monsieur Jordan and his sister. In the little salon opening on the park he found Sœurette, in company with Hermeline the school-master and Abbé Marle, while Jordan himself, stretched out upon a couch wrapped in a blanket, was, according to his wont, dreamily gazing at the darkening heavens. Kind Dr. Novarre had died not long before among the roses of his garden. His sole regret had been that he could not live long enough to see the completion of all the beautiful things in which he had been unable to believe at one time. So Sœurette's little party was now reduced to the priest and the school-master, who came occasionally to resume the old habit of meeting each other at her breakfast-table. Hermeline, now seventy, had given up his position as school-master, and was passing his last years in bitter disappointment, much vexed by everything now going on before his eyes. He had even begun to think that Abbé Marle was lukewarm. The abbé, who was five years older than himself, maintained a sad and silent dignity. He was growing less and less willing to speak of what he felt, and he saw his church deserted and his God overthrown.

Just as Luc was seating himself, patient and silent, beside Sœurette, the school-master began to resume his old accusations as a factional republican against the clericals.

"Come, come, abbé; I want you to help me, since I am now supporting your own views. The end of the world has come; these children, whose education has cultivated, not repressed, their passions, those ill weeds that we, their teachers, were formerly at pains to root up and destroy, how are they to become good citizens, trained to serve the state, if their anarchic individuality has never felt curb or bridle? All will be lost if we, who are orderly, sensible men, do not hasten to save the republic."

Now that he had learned to speak of saving the re-

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public against the attacks of those whom he called socialists and anarchists, he had gone over to the reactionary party, and had adopted the hatred that the priest felt for all who attempted any reforms that were not conducted by himself, opposing anything beyond his narrow Jacobin formula, to which he adhered with obstinacy.

He went on with more violence:

"And I tell you, abbé, that your church, too, will be swept away if you do not defend yourself. Your religion, as you know, has never been mine, but I have always recognized the fact that the mass of the people needs some religion, and Catholicism was undoubtedly an admirable factor in government. Set to work, then! We republicans are with you, and we will settle our differences when the work is done, when as allies we shall have reconquered men's bodies and souls.

Abbé Marle slowly shook his head. He made no answer; he never now grew angry. At last he said:

"I do my duty. Every morning I am at my altar, even though no one else may be in my church, and I pray God to do a miracle. He will, I know, if He finds it necessary."

This speech completed the exasperation of the schoolmaster.

"Come, come," said he, "you must do what you can to aid your God. It is mere cowardice to do nothing, and it is more so now that I tell you we are ready to act with you! Devil take you!—we must all act!"

Sœurette here thought she had better interpose, and, full of sympathy for the combatant who was losing ground, she said, smiling:

"If our good doctor were still with us he would beg you not to agree on this subject, for an alliance would only aggravate your quarrel. You make me wretched, my friends. I should have been so glad, not to convert you to our ideas, but to see that you could at least recognize by its results a little of the good that they have here accomplished."

Both had great respect for a woman so gentle and so

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holy, and their presence in her little parlor, in the very centre of the rising city, showed what an influence she could always exert over them. They even went so far as to bear with the presence of Luc, that victorious enemy, who, it must be said, never made any display of his triumph, letting nothing be seen but his great pity for what he felt to be the dying agonies of a worn-out world. This time again he did not intervene, and made no answer to the furious attacks of Hermeline on all that he had attempted, because all had turned out according to his wishes. What he now heard was a last protest of the principle of authority against man's social, natural liberation, another form of tyranny, the State all-powerful against the even more powerful Church, each furiously wanting to claim the people, now willing to enter into an alliance, but ready to recommence the struggle as soon as by their united efforts the people should have thrown off civil servitude as well as their allegiance to religion.

"Ah!" cried Hermeline again, "if you own yourself conquered, abbé, all is lost; and all that I can do is to follow your example, and die silent in my own corner."

The priest once more shook his head like a man who thinks it useless to attempt to answer. Yet for the last time he replied:

"God cannot be conquered. We must leave action to God."

Night was falling slowly over the park, and the little room was becoming dark. Nobody spoke, and a chill seemed to have passed over them—a chill from the melancholy past. The school-master rose and took his leave. Then, as the priest was rising to do the same, Sœurette tried quietly to slip into his hand the money she always gave him when he came to see her, to be spent on his poor people. But though he had been accepting her charitable offering for forty years, he now declined it, saying, in a slow, deep voice:

"No, thank you, mademoiselle; keep this money. I should not know what to do with it. There are no more poor."

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Ah! how grateful were these words to Luc—"no more poor!" His heart leaped within him. "No more poor!"—no more poor creatures starving in that Beauclair he had known so hopeless and so miserable, with its cursed population of wage-earners dying of hunger! Were all the sores of the old system about to be healed? Were crime and shame to disappear with poverty? It had sufficed that labor should have been reorganized with justice to bring about a better division of wealth. And what might not be hoped when labor should be held in honor, and a community full of brotherly love and peace should people his happy city?

Jordan, lying on his couch wrapped in a warm coverlet, had not moved. He had doubtless been travelling in spirit over infinite space, for he lay looking into the heavens. When the abbé and Hermeline were gone he roused himself, and, still looking at the setting sun, whose slow disappearance he seemed to be watching with peculiar interest, said, as if speaking in a dream:

"Every time that I see a sunset I feel sad and anxious. Suppose the sun were never to come back to revisit a dark, frozen world, what a terrible death it would entail on all things living! The sun is the father, the fecundator, and the begetter, without whom seeds would dry up in the ground or rot away; and it is to him that we must trust for future relief and happiness, for if he did not help us all life would some day disappear."

Luc began to smile. He knew that Jordan, in spite of his great age, for he was nearly seventy-five, had been for some years studying the difficult problem of how to store up solar heat, so as to accumulate it in great reservoirs whence he might distribute it as the great, eternal, only living force. He foresaw that a time would come when coal would be exhausted in our mines, and what would then produce the immense quantity of electricity that would have become indispensable to men in their daily life? Thanks to his first discoveries, he had succeeded in giving them electric power almost for nothing. But how glorious it would be if he could succeed in making the

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sun himself the universal motor, if he could draw directly from his rays that calorific power contained in coal, and use it as the only source of fecundity, the parent of an immortal existence. He had only this last discovery to make, and then his work would be accomplished. He would be ready to die.

"Be easy," said Luc, cheerfully; "the sun will rise to-morrow, and you will end by getting him to give you his sacred fire, the divine rays which alone can create, without rest and beyond time."

Sœurette, growing a little anxious lest the evening breeze which was coming in at the window should give her brother a cold, came near, and asked him:

"Sha'n't I shut the window?"

But he made a gesture of refusal, and merely allowed her to wrap him more closely in his coverings. It seemed as if he lived only by a miracle, because he willed to live, and wanted to put off his death till the evening of the day when his work would be accomplished—that night when, his work finished, his task done, he would sink into his last sleep a satisfied and faithful workman. His sister redoubled her cares, and her precautions no doubt prolonged his life; and every day he could command two hours of physical and mental energy, every minute of which he utilized, thanks to his keen sense of method and order. Thus this poor frail being, so old, so near the close of life, to whom the least current of night air might put an end, was bent on conquering and ruling the earth by his discovery, laboring simply like an honest workman who will not leave his work till it is done.

"You will live to be a hundred, as far as I can see," said Luc, with his kind laugh.

Jordan began to laugh, too.

"Of course I shall, if I need to live a hundred years."

Again there was silence in the little parlor among these three devoted friends. The warm twilight was delicious as it spread over the park, the long avenues of which grew black as the gloom increased. A little light still gleamed on the mown lawns, while in the blue horizon

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the great trees disappeared, or seemed merely trembling shadows. This was the lovers' hour. The park of La Crêcherie was all open to them; they came there at the close of day, after their task was finished at the works, and their daily household occupations at home. Nobody interfered with these wandering couples, these phantoms with their arms round each other's waists, and after being a few moments in sight from the windows of the house, they disappeared among the foliage. They were confided to the watchful care of the friendly old oaks, and the liberty given them to love was counted upon to keep them chaste and within proper bounds, as future wives and husbands whose union would become inseparable if it had been wisely and freely made. Those who are to love always should know why and how they love. If they have chosen each other by mutual consent and with thorough knowledge of each other, they will not grow apart; they never will separate; they will grow closer to each other more and more. And this night, on the lawns now darkened by the shades of evening, pairs of lovers were wandering like phantoms, peopling the mysterious darkness, while the earth was thrilling with delight in the fresh odors of spring.

More and more couples came into view, and Luc recognized some of them as boys and girls whom he had seen that morning in the workshops. Was not that Adolphe Laboque with Germaine Yvonnot, closely linked together, pressing the tall grasses with elastic tread? That other pair, both looking down till the hair on their bent heads touched, surely they were Hippolyte Mitaine and Laure Fauchard? Were not two others Alexandre Feuillat and Clémentine Bourron, with arms round each other's waists, as if they were never to be unclasped again? And Luc felt even deeper emotion when he recognized two of his own sons. His son Charles, who was clasping to his breast Céline Lenfant, the brunette, and his other son Jules, his youngest born, who was walking in close company with Claudine Bonnaire, the fair. Ah! those handsome young people! they were the prophets of a new

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spring, couples born of love matches, by whom would again be lighted that torch of life which generations pass on to one another. As yet they were experiencing only the chaste thrill which came from whispered words of love, innocent caresses, a pressure of hands in which hearts sought a response, a furtive kiss whose sweetness seemed to open heaven. But before long the flame would grow intense, and when if at last united they should be the parents of children, other lovers would be born of them, others would some day walk in this park as they had done, in the happy time of young love and tenderness. There would thus always be more happiness, more true love creating more mutual sympathy. And more and more young couples kept arriving in the park, which soon seemed as if it must contain all the lovers in the happy city. Such an evening was beautiful after a day of toil, and delightful were the lawns and coppices, with their sweet odors and their mysterious shadows, from which proceeded little sounds of kisses and light laughter.

At this moment a figure stopped before the window of the salon; it was Suzanne, who was very uneasy. She was looking for Luc, to tell him of her anxiety; and, when she found that he was there, she explained to him how frightened she was to find that Boisgelin had not come home. He never had been so late. He never stayed out after nightfall.

"You were right," she said, "and I was wrong to let him, in the state he was, go unwatched and unguarded. Ah! the unfortunate man! the aged child!"

Luc, infected by her fear, begged her to go home.

"He might come in at any moment," said he, "and it is best that you should be there. I will search for him everywhere, and bring you tidings."

He at once took two men with him, and crossed the park with the idea of beginning his search in the neighborhood of the works; but he had gone scarcely a hundred yards, and was near the edge of a small lake, under some willows, a veritable corner of paradise, when a slight cry of terror from a neighboring clump of foliage caused him

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suddenly to stop. From amid the foliage came two lovers in a state of fright and excitement, in one of them Luc thought that he recognized his son Jules, and, in the other, Claudine Bonnaire.

"What is it? What's the matter?" he called out to them.

They did not answer, but flew by him lightly, as if wafted by a gust of terror. They were like two little birds whose happy love-making has been interrupted by something that has startled them. Then he decided at once to see for himself, and when he entered the coppice by a narrow path among the trees, he, too, uttered a cry of terror. He had come near striking against a body hanging from a branch and barring the path with its black form. By the little light still lingering in the sky he recognized Boisgelin.

"Ah! the unfortunate man! the aged child!" he murmured, repeating Suzanne's words. He was overwhelmed at the thought of this tragic event, which would be so painful to her.

Aided by the two men, he quickly cut the body down and laid it on the ground. But it was cold. The suicide must have taken place early in the afternoon, shortly after the unhappy man had been seen walking round the workshops. And Luc thought he understood it, when at the foot of the tree he saw a deep hole that Boisgelin must have attempted to dig with his hands and nails in order to bury in it the immense wealth which so many men as he had seen at work were accumulating for him, and which he did not know how to invest nor how to dispose of. At last, no doubt despairing of making the hole large enough, and fearing that it would not contain the vast amount of his imaginary treasure, he had made up his mind to die upon the spot, weighed down by the difficulty of disposing of his millions of capital, every day accumulating. He had wandered around the workshops for a whole day, till he felt that he could no longer exist in this city of honest labor, and this had brought about his tragic end, when in the warm, soft night the park had been filled with lovers' vows and innocent caresses.

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To avoid alarming the happy pairs who were dimly seen flitting through the trees, Luc sent his two men to bring a stretcher from La Crêcherie, and begged them to tell no one of the mournful discovery. Then, after they had come back and laid the body under the little curtains of gray canvas, the sad cortège began its march through the darkest paths, hoping to escape observation. Thus silently the dead man was borne home in the darkness, on a delightful night in spring when everything was quivering with new life.

Suzanne was standing at her front door, anxiously trying to see into the darkness. When she perceived the stretcher she understood, and uttered a stifled cry. And when Luc in a few words told her the sad end of the poor, useless creature who lay there asleep, she could only repeat again, as she thought of the empty, corrupted, and corrupting existence from which she had suffered so much:

"Ah! the unfortunate man! the aged child!"

Other catastrophes took place in the crumbling of the old rotten society doomed to destruction. During the following month the most startling event was the falling in of the roof of the old Church of Saint Vincent one sunny morning while Abbé Marle was at the altar celebrating mass, with no other congregation than the sparrows that were flying about in the deserted nave.

The priest had long foreseen that the roof of his church would some day fall upon his head. It had been built in the sixteenth century, and had once been very beautiful, but was now much injured and was everywhere cracked and out of repair. The steeple had been repaired forty years before, but for want of the necessary funds the restoration of the roof had been postponed, though its timbers, half rotted, were even then insecure. Ever since then Abbé Marle had asked in vain for funds. The state, groaning under a load of debt, took no interest in a church that was in an out-of-the-way part of the country. The town of Beauclair refused any contribution, for Mayor Gourier had been no friend to priests. So that the abbé, reduced to rely upon himself, had set to work personally to

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try to procure the large sum, more needed than ever, as all might see, from day to day, if he did not wish to see the house of God fall on his head. But in vain he applied to his rich parishioners. So long as the mayor's wife lived—*la belle Leonore,* whose devotion to the church made up to him for the atheism of her husband—he had found valuable support in her. Afterwards Madame Mazelle was his only hope, but her fervor was growing cold, and she was not naturally generous. Later on, after financial troubles had come upon her, she visited Saint Vincent's less frequently, and the abbé finally lost in her his last rich parishioner, and all that were left him were some poor women. His church grew more and more empty, and he officiated in solitude.

Then Abbé Marle felt that the world was coming to an end, and that everything was perishing around him. All his efforts had not been able to save the lying, corrupting *bourgeoisie,* eaten up with greed and iniquity. In vain he covered his sufferings with the cloak of religion. In vain he tried to take refuge in strict dogma, and would give in to none of the new theories of science, whose first assault against Catholicism the Church had already sustained. Science went on making breaches in the secular edifice of the Church; dogma was at last attacked and overthrown, and the Kingdom of Heaven to be set up on the earth was to be triumphant in the name of justice. It aimed to establish a new religion, the religion of humanity, a religion of knowledge, a religion freed from ancient symbolism and old mythology. Like the ancient temples of idolatry, the Catholic religion, men said, would disappear in its turn when all people should find happiness in solidarity, and should need to be governed by no system of penances or rewards. And the priest, now that his church was empty of worshippers, heard every day when he said mass the cracks in the church walls growing larger and the beams giving way more and more. It was the constant, slow work of steady disintegration, of impending destruction, and the little noises he heard were the pre-

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cursors of ruin. He had not succeeded in raising enough money to hire masons for the most urgent repairs of the roof; he had to let the slow work of destruction go on and come to its inevitable end like other things in this world. Meantime he waited calmly, continuing daily to say mass, a hero of the faith, left alone with his God, and like Him deserted by men, while the roof of the church cracked more and more over the high altar.

That morning Abbé Marle had remarked an immense new opening in the ceiling of the nave, which had taken place during the night. He felt sure that the fall of the roof could not be far off, but he went on celebrating his last mass, clad in his richest sacerdotal vestments. Tall and strong, with an aquiline nose, he stood up straight and firm in the chancel, notwithstanding his great age. He dismissed his acolytes, and walked up and down, making the prescribed gestures as if a congregation were before him attentive to his words. And yet the church was now deserted, and only broken chairs were to be seen on the floor of the aisles, looking like seats in some desolate garden, black with mildew, forgotten all winter, and left out in the rain. Grass was growing at the foot of the pillars, which had become moss-grown. The wind blew in through broken windows, and the great door itself, which now could not be firmly closed, let creatures from the outside enter the sacred edifice. But on this beautiful day the sun was entering as a conqueror, symbolizing the triumphal invasion of a new life which was to take possession of this sad ruin. Over the altar was a great painted and gilded wooden crucifix. It stood there with the pale form hanging on the cross, with stains of black blood that had fallen drop by drop.

As Abbé Marle was reading the gospel he heard a loud crack. Dust, stones, and other fragments fell upon the altar. Then, when he reached the offertory, the noise began again, with a tearing, rending sound. There was a little shock as if the whole building were trembling for a moment before falling. Then the priest, with final energy, raised the Host, and with his whole soul prayed

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God to work a miracle. He had confidently expected this collapse for some days. If God willed, the church could recover the beauty of past ages, and its strong pillars would hold up the nave uninjured. Masons would not be needed; the divine word of power would be all that was wanted; the chancel would be magnificently restored with gilded chapels. It would have windows of purple glass, with wonderful woodwork and shining marble, while faithful worshippers upon their knees would sing the canticle of resurrection among thousands of tapers and to resounding peals of bells.

"O God of all power and eternity, be pleased to rebuild and re-establish Thine own house; Thou alone canst build it up and fill it again with those who worship Thee. Hear me, O Lord, lest others should think Thou Thyself art crushed under its ruins."

And as he raised the chalice, it was not the miracle he had asked for that was sent, but his own martyrdom. He stood erect, both arms raised above his head, in an attitude of firm belief and of heroic constancy, seeming to implore his Divine Master to perish with him if the end of his church had come.

The roof cracked open with a sound like thunder. The steeple shook, and then fell, laying the nave open to the sky, and pulling down with it the disjointed walls. Nothing remained under the bright sun but an enormous pile of stones and débris, beneath which they never found the mangled body of Abbé Marle, who seemed to have been crushed to dust under the ruins of the altar. Nor did they ever find any fragments of the great painted and gilded wooden crucifix, which also had been ground to powder. A religion had been killed along with the last priest, celebrating his last mass in the last church.

For a short time old Hermeline the school-master roamed around the ruins, talking aloud to himself, as very old people are apt to do when a fixed idea is haunting them. His words were not distinct, but he seemed to be holding an argument with the abbé, and reproaching him for not having obtained from the God in whom he be-

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lieved a miracle that would have prevented this catastrophe. Then one morning they found him dead in his bed. And later, after they had cleared away the ruins of the old church, a garden was planted on the spot, with beautiful trees and umbrageous walks and intersecting fragrant lawns. Lovers came there on pleasant evenings, as they did to the park of La Crêcherie. The happy city kept growing larger; the children grew up, and made new pairs of lovers who, in their turn, gave birth to another generation. Sweet roses seemed to grow for them on all the bushes.

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IV

DURING the next ten years the city was finally established, and the new social conditions of justice and peace were organized. In the tenth year, on the 20th of June, on the evening of one of the great labor holidays, which occurred four times a year, at each of the four seasons, Bonnaire had an adventure.

Bonnaire, who would soon be eighty-five years old, was the patriarch and the hero of labor. He was still tall, erect, and strong, very healthy, very active, and very merry, with his long hair like the white mane of some old lion in repose. The ancient revolutionist, the theoretical collectivist, now pacified by the realization of his comrades' happiness, lived only to enjoy the recompense of his long efforts, that conquest of established harmony in which he saw his grandchildren and great-grandchildren happily brought up. He was one of the last workmen survivors of the great struggle, one of the strivers for that reorganization of labor that should lead to a just division of wealth, and thus restore to the laborer his nobility and his free personality as an intelligent and happy man. He was now full of years and glory, proud of having contributed by his numerous descendants to the fusion of antagonistic classes, useful still in the evening of his existence by reason of the beauty of his character and his infinite patriarchal kindness.

This particular evening, at the decline of day, Bonnaire was taking a walk at the entrance of the Brias gorge. He often made long excursions thus on foot, aided only by a cane, for the pleasure of seeing the country once more and invoking old reminiscences. He had reached exactly the place where the gate of the Pit, now long dis-

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used, had formerly opened. There had been there, also, a wooden bridge, thrown across the Mionne, of which there was no longer a trace, for the torrent was now covered over for about a hundred yards in order to allow a wide boulevard to cross. Among such changes who would have recognized the dark and dirty threshold of the accursed factory in this avenue bordered by smiling houses which was so calm and so bright. As Bonnaire stopped a moment he was greatly surprised at seeing another old man reclining upon a bench, and who seemed overwhelmed with poverty, his clothes in rags, his face disfigured, his hair shaggy, and his emaciated body trembling with all the ills of fever.

"A pauper!" said Bonnaire, speaking aloud in his astonishment.

It was indeed a pauper, and it was now years since he had encountered one. But this particular specimen was evidently not from the neighborhood. To judge from his shoes and his clothes, which were white with dust, he must have fallen down with fatigue at the entrance to the town after days and days of being on the march. His stick and his empty knapsack, fallen from his nerveless hands, lay at his feet. As he lay exhausted and overcome, he looked about him with wandering eyes, like a lost man who no longer knows where he is.

Bonnaire approached him with great compassion.

"My poor man," said he, "can I be of assistance to you? You are exhausted with fatigue, and you seem in great trouble."

Then, as the pauper did not answer, his terrified looks still wandering from one point to another, Bonnaire continued:

"Are you hungry? Do you need a good bed? I will take charge of you; you will find aid and succor here."

At length the old man, miserable and forlorn, made an effort, and stammered very low, as though speaking to himself:

"Beauclair, Beauclair; is this really Beauclair?"

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"Undoubtedly it is Beauclair; you are at Beauclair, that is certain," declared the master-puddler, smiling.

But on seeing the pauper give increasing evidence of uneasy surprise and doubt, he finally began to understand.

"You knew Beauclair, perhaps, formerly," said he. "It may be a long time since you left it."

"Yes, more than fifty years," answered the unknown in his hollow voice.

Bonnaire then burst into a hearty laugh.

"Ah!" said he. "I am not surprised that you have difficulty in recognizing it. There have been some changes. For instance, see, in this very place the works of the Pit have disappeared, while down below, farther off, the whole of old Beauclair, that wretched hole, has been pulled down; you see it is a new city that is built; it is the park of La Crêcherie which has extended until it has surrounded the old town with its verdure, and the latter is now an immense garden where the little white houses stand gayly among the trees. Of course it is necessary to consider a little before you know where you are."

The pauper had followed these explanations, turning his eyes towards the points that the old man pointed out to him with such happy cheerfulness. But he shook his head once more; he could not believe in the reality of what was said to him.

"No, no," said he. "I do not see; it is no longer Beauclair. There are certainly the two promontories of the Monts Bleuses, between which opens out the Brias gorge, and there is also, in the distance, the plain of Roumagne. That is all that remains; these gardens and these houses are of another country, a country of riches and enchantment that I have never seen. Come, I must march on. I am certainly deceived in the road."

He made an effort to rise from the bench, while gathering up his stick and his wallet, when his glance at last rested on the old man who had shown him such gentle courtesy. Until then he had been occupied with himself, looking about him as if in a dream, and speaking to him-

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self in a low voice. Then, all at once, at the first look that he threw upon Bonnaire, he became mute; he seemed terrified and in haste to depart. Had he recognized the latter, then, when he failed to recognize the town? Bonnaire was so struck by the sudden illumination that flashed over this unrecognizable face, covered with shaggy hair, that he examined it with more attention. Where had he seen those wide-open eyes, lighted up at moments with violence? Suddenly remembrance awoke within him, and he shuddered in his turn, while all the past awoke in the cry that trembled on his lips—

"Ragu!"

For fifty years they had believed him dead. The mutilated, mangled body found at the bottom of an abyss in the Monts Bleuses the day following his flight after his crime had not been his, then? He lived, he lived; great Heavens! He had reappeared, and this extraordinary resurrection, this dead man rising from the tomb after so many events, brought with it all the anguish of the unknown, the secret anxiety of what had happened yesterday and what would happen to-morrow.

"Ragu! Ragu! it is you!"

The man had once more taken his stick in his hand and his knapsack on his shoulder. But from the moment that he was recognized, why should he set forth again? He could not be deceived about the road.

"It is I, sure enough, my old Bonnaire, and since you are still living, you who are my senior by ten years, I may very well be living, too; ah! that is a very great pity, when all is said and done, that is true!"

Then in his jeering tone of former times he said:

"Come, give me your word that this is really Beauclair, all this great, magnificent garden with these pretty houses. And since I have arrived, the only thing for me to do is to find an inn where they will permit me to sleep in a corner of the stable."

Why, then, had he returned? What project was agitating his disordered brain, behind that face seamed by so many years of vagabondage and evil living? Bonnaire,

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more and more uneasy, and filled with fear, already saw him disturbing the next day's *fête* with some scandal, and did not dare to ask questions immediately. But, nevertheless, he wished to take him under his care, being full of pity, and feeling his heart moved at finding Ragu again in such destitution.

"There is no longer an inn, comrade," said he, "and you are going to come to my house. You shall satisfy your hunger, and you shall sleep in a clean bed. Then we will talk; you shall tell me what you will, and I will help you towards what you want, if it is possible."

Ragu still jeered.

"Oh, what I want! Nothing; the wish of an old beggar, who is half crippled, is no longer of any consequence. I want to see you again, and, in passing, to glance at the country where I was born. That was what tormented me—that idea—and I could not die easy without coming back to take a turn around here. That is allowed, is it not? The roads are still free?"

"Certainly."

"Then I shall be starting out again. Oh! it has been years and years. When one has poor legs and not a sou in the world, one does not advance very quickly, but one gets there all the same, since here I am. And, as you speak of it, let us go to your house, if you offer me hospitality like a good comrade."

The night was approaching, and the two old men could cross the new Beauclair without being remarked by any one. Ragu continued to give way to astonishment and cast glances to right and left, but failed to recognize any of the places through which they were passing. At last, when Bonnaire stopped before one of the most charming of the houses, standing beneath a group of beautiful trees, he gave vent to an exclamation in which all his former nature reappeared.

"You have made your fortune, then; you are a *bourgeois!*"

The old master-puddler began to laugh.

"No, no; I have been, and am, nothing more than a

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workman. But it is true, notwithstanding, for we have all made fortunes; we are all *bourgeois.*"

Ragu sneered, as though his envious feelings were reassured.

"A workman cannot be a *bourgeois,* and when a man is still working, it is because he has not made a fortune."

"Very good, old comrade. I told you that we would talk, and I will explain this. In the meanwhile, come in; come in."

Bonnaire was living alone, for the moment, in the house that belonged to his granddaughter Claudine, who was married to Charles Froment. Father Linot had been dead for a long time, and his daughter, Ragu's sister, the terrible La Toupe, had joined him the preceding year, after a terrible quarrel, in which she had, as she said, received a stroke. When Ragu heard of this double loss, and that the places of his father and sister were vacant, he simply made a gesture, as though to say that he expected it, on account of their great age. After half a century of absence, a failure to meet some one again is not surprising.

"We are here, then, in the house of my granddaughter Claudine, the daughter of my eldest son, Lucien, who has married Louise Mazelle, the young lady of fortune whom you should remember. Claudine herself is married to Charles Froment, a son of the master of La Crêcherie. But they have just taken their little girl Alice, who is eight years old, to her aunt's house at Formeries, whence they will not return until to-morrow."

Then Bonnaire concluded, merrily:

"It is several months since the children took me with them, in order to pamper me a little. The house is our own; eat and drink, then; afterwards I will take you to your bed, and to-morrow, when it is daylight, we shall understand each other."

Ragu had listened in a sort of stupor. All these names, all these marriages, and all these three generations passing before him like a flash of lightning frightened him. How could he understand, how could he find his bearings in the midst of these events of which he was in ignorance,

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and of these deaths and births? Bonnaire, becoming uneasy at seeing him so gloomy and disquieted, asked himself by what unknown adventures he could have drifted about during half a century, and became astonished at the fact that he was still living in the midst of such misery.

"Where did you come from?" asked he, at length.

"Oh, from everywhere!" answered Ragu, with a sweep of the hand that took in the whole extent of the horizon.

"Then you must have seen other countries, and people, and things?"

"Oh yes; in France, in Germany, in England, and in America. I have dragged my carcass from one end of the world to the other."

And before going to sleep, while smoking his pipe, he gave an outline of his existence as a wandering workman, idle and pleasure-loving, who had revolted against labor. He had never succeeded in laying up a sou; poverty became everywhere more constantly his mistress, and each succeeding year was a new stage on his downward track. When old age overtook him it was, indeed, a miracle that he did not die of hunger and want in the corner of some field. Up to sixty he had not worked much except at little jobs. Then he got into a hospital, was forced at last to come out, and then fell into another. For fifteen years he had managed to live on chance jobs. Now he was simply begging, and in this way found along the roads the bit of bread and bed of straw that he needed. Nothing in him was changed, neither his secret rage nor the mad desire to be master and to enjoy himself.

"But," answered Bonnaire, who had restrained the flood of questions that rose to his lips, "all these countries that you have visited are in a condition of progress! Here, I know very well that we have moved very quickly; we are in advance. But, nevertheless, the whole world is progressing, is it not?"

"Yes, yes," answered Ragu, with his scoffing air; "they are scrambling, they are making over society a little everywhere; but all of that did not save me from poverty and hunger."

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To-day, an aged vagabond and beggar, he jeered at their city of justice and peace. This would not give him back his twenty years; it would not give him a palace with slaves, so that he could end his life in the midst of enjoyment, like the kings spoken of in books. And he jested bitterly at the stupidity of human beings who gave themselves so much trouble to prepare for their great-great-grandchildren, in a future age, houses a little better than their own, which seemed to be the dream of men of to-day.

"This dream has sufficed a long time for happiness," said Bonnaire, quietly. "But what you say is no longer true; the house is now almost reconstructed; it is very beautiful, very healthy, and very cheerful, and I will show it to you to-morrow, and you shall see if it is not a pleasure to live in it."

Then he explained to Ragu that the next day he would take him to share in one of the four labor *fêtes,* which on the first day of each season caused great festivity in Beauclair. Each of them was marked by rejoicings especially adapted to the particular season. That which was to take place next day, the *fête* of summer, would be gay with all the flowers and all the fruits of the earth, overflowing in a prodigious abundance of wealth acquired, and in the sovereign splendor of landscape and sky, where blazed the gorgeous sun of June.

When Bonnaire rose to conduct him to the room where he was to sleep, a spotless apartment containing a large white bed which promised the utmost comfort, he followed with a lagging step, suffering greatly from this abundant hospitality, so kindly in its pleasant freedom.

"Sleep well, comrade, until to-morrow morning."

"Yes, to-morrow morning, unless this accursed world crumbles to pieces during the night."

But Bonnaire, after he also had gone to rest, had some difficulty in sleeping. He, too, entertained some uneasiness, and was continually asking himself what Ragu's intentions could be. He had repeatedly resisted the desire to interrogate the latter directly, for fear of provoking a dangerous explanation, thinking it wiser to wait, and

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then to act according to circumstances. When he finally slept he dreamed of a dreadful scene, in which this miserable vagabond, mad with poverty and misfortune, figured as coming back only to create a scandal, insulting Luc, insulting Josine, and perhaps committing his crime over again. It was this very abomination that he wished to avoid, and he swore to himself not to leave Ragu for a moment the next day, and to accompany him everywhere, in order to be sure that he was never left alone. Bonnaire went to sleep at length, resolved upon this last struggle for peace and universal love.

The next morning at six o'clock trumpet-blasts sounded forth and spread a joyous summons over the roofs of Beauclair, to announce the *fête* of labor. The sun was already high, an orb of joy and of strength, in the blue immensity of the exquisite June sky. Windows opened, salutations passed from one house to another, amid the verdure, and the soul of the people in this new city could be felt entering into gladness, while the trumpet-calls continued, as they went from garden to garden, awakening the cries of children and the laughter of loving couples.

Bonnaire dressed quickly, and found Ragu up, washed in the abundant supply of water in a neighboring bath-tub, and dressed in decent clothes, put upon a chair for him the evening before. And Ragu, now that he was rested, had become again jeering, openly resolved on mocking at everything, and not accepting the slightest progress. On seeing his host enter he burst into his evil laugh—that laugh which was so impudent and low-minded.

"Tell me, old fellow," said he, "are these blackguards making a holiday with their trumpets? It must be very annoying for people who do not like to be waked up all of a sudden. Do they play this music for you every morning in your barracks?"

The old master-puddler was relieved to see his guest in this mood, and began to smile tranquilly.

"No, no; this is only the gay awakening of the *fête* day. Other days you can sleep as late as you please in a delicious silence. But when life is pleasant one

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always gets up early, and invalids alone want to stay in bed."

Then, with his engaging kindness, he said:

"Did you sleep well? Did you find everything you needed?"

Ragu again made an effort to be disagreeable.

"Oh, I sleep well everywhere; I have for years slept in hay-ricks, and they are worth all the best beds in the world."

And seeing that his host did not answer, he concluded:

"You have too much water in your houses; they must be damp."

Ah! what blasphemy! that fresh water, that blessed water, so pure and so clear, that was now the health, the joy, the strength of Beauclair, in which they bathed continually, with which they watered their grounds, and which was used freely for the freshness of their streets and the glory of their trees.

"Our water is our friend; it is the good fairy of our happy destiny," answered Bonnaire, simply. "You will see it everywhere, flowing freely and improving the city. Come, let us first go to breakfast; then we will go out at once."

This early breakfast in the bright dining-room filled with the rising sun was delicious. On the snowy table-cloth were milk, eggs, and fruit, with beautiful golden bread, smelling so sweet that it could be seen that it had been kneaded and baked by careful management for a happy people. The aged host offered his wretched guest a number of delicate attentions, a sort of hospitality—tender, heroic, and simple — that seemed to impart an infinite peace and kindness to the calm atmosphere.

They conversed again while eating. Bonnaire felt, as he had done the evening before, that he ought not to put direct questions, both from prudence and discretion. He felt convinced that Ragu, after the manner of all criminals, had come back to the same place where he had committed his crime, consumed by the overpowering need of seeing and knowing. Was Josine still living? What was

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she doing? And had Luc been saved from death and taken her to himself? In short, what had become of both? All these burning questions certainly shone in the flame that still burned in the old vagabond's eyes. But as he kept his secret and did not open his lips on such matters, Bonnaire was obliged to content himself by putting into execution the plan formed by him the evening before—namely, the exaltation of the new city and the glorification of its prosperity and power. Therefore, without even mentioning Luc's name, he began to explain the grandeur of his work.

"In order that you may understand, comrade, I must tell you where we are before we proceed to walk about in Beauclair and to contemplate the results. To-day we celebrate the triumph, the complete fulfilment of the movement that was hardly begun at the time of your departure."

Then he took up the evolution from the beginning, and described the wonderful progress that had been made.

Concluding, he said to Ragu, pleasantly, "Since you have finished breakfast, let us go and see these beautiful things, in our Beauclair rebuilt and glorified and now in its holiday brilliance. I shall not neglect to show you a single interesting spot."

Ragu, firmly resolved not to give in, shrugged his shoulders, and repeated the phrase that he considered decisive:

"Just as you choose, but you are not gentlemen; you remain miserable devils, if you always work. Work is your master, and you are still nothing but a pack of slaves."

Before the door there stood an electric *voiturette* with seats for two. There were others like these at the disposal of all. The old master-puddler, who, in spite of his great age, had sharp eyes and a firm hand, made his companion mount, and installed himself as driver.

"You are not going to cripple me with this machine?" said Ragu.

"No, no; don't be afraid. Electricity knows me. We have been companions for years."

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He said this in a tender and devout tone, as if he had spoken of a new divinity, of a beneficent power from which the city would derive the greater part of its prosperity and its happiness.

"You are going to find it everywhere, that great and sovereign energy, without which so much rapid progress could not have been accomplished. It is now the only power used in our machinery, and does not remain confined to our general workshops, but is used in private houses. It is in action in all the small special trades, and it is the domestic power at every one's disposal, for the smallest necessities, by simply turning a button. By turning another button it gives us light. Still another button and it warms us. Everywhere, in the fields, in the town, in the streets, even those of the most modest dwellings, it is present; it works for us in silence; it is nature conquered, lightning mastered, and by it our comfort is completed."

He laughed genially at this hope of putting the darkness forever to flight, while the voiturette rolled along the great avenues, with its rapid, gentle motion. His idea was, before going through Beauclair, to drive as far as Combettes, to show his companion first the magnificent domain which was changing Roumagne into a paradise of fertility and delight. This holiday morning was all sunshine; the roads were filled with gayety and the beautiful, triumphant sun. Other voiturettes, in infinite numbers, appeared, all full of song and laughter. A great many pedestrians also were arriving from the neighboring villages, the greater part in bands, the boys and girls decked with ribbons, and they gave joyous salutes as the old man, who was their patriarch, passed by. What splendid cultivation was spread out upon both sides of the road; what vast fields of wheat, of which the end could not be seen—whole seas of wheat of a deep and rich green!

"You see, comrade," resumed Bonnaire, with a sweep of the hand, "there is bread from one end to the other of the horizon. It is bread for all; bread in which each of us has a birthright."

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"Do you feed even those who do not work?" asked Ragu.

"Certainly. But there is seldom any one, besides the sick and infirm, who does not work. When a person is well, he is wearied by not working."

The voiturette was now passing through the orchards, and the interminable alleys of cherry-trees covered with red fruit were delightful. They seemed like enchanted trees smiling and rejoicing in the sunshine. The apricots were not ripe, and the apple and pear trees were bending under the abundance of their green burdens. There was a wonderful prodigality wherewith to furnish dessert to an entire community up to the next spring.

"Bread by itself is a poor diet," remarked Ragu, ironically.

"Oh!" said Bonnaire, who also began to joke, "there is a little dessert added. You see it is not fruit which is lacking."

They had reached Combettes. The miserable village had disappeared, and white houses now stood amid the verdure, all along the Grand-Jean.

"You remember the old Combettes?" asked Bonnaire, again; "the hovels in the mud and smoke, and the peasants with their wild eyes, who complained of suffering with hunger? See what association has made of it!"

But in his savage jealousy Ragu was not willing to allow himself to be convinced. Resolved to array himself against all that could be shown him, he abstractly hoped to discover in it something wrong, since a malediction of labor remained in his lazy blood, and his long line of descent in slavery had allowed the wages system to rivet its chains upon him.

"If they work they are not happy," repeated he, obstinately. "Their happiness is a sham; the really good thing is to do nothing."

And he who used to abuse the priests remarked:

"Does not the catechism say that labor is the punishment, the degradation of man? When we go to paradise we shall do nothing."

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In returning, they passed in front of Guerdache, which was now one of the public gardens of the new city, always filled with young mothers and a crowd of playful children. And along the stately avenues, where formerly huntsmen galloped, contented mothers, in light dresses, were pushing little carriages in which new-born babies smiled.

"What sort of nonsense is this," said Ragu, once more, "to talk of luxury and enjoyment by which every one profits? It is good only when it is for me alone."

The voiturette still continued on its way, and they reentered the new Beauclair. The general aspect of the reconstructed town was that of an immense garden, where the houses were separated intentionally amid the verdure in acknowledgment of the necessity of fresh air and liberty of life. Then on the squares at the junction of the wide avenues were erected public buildings — immense structures in which iron and steel were triumphant, in bold frames. Magnificence was created by simplicity, suitable adaptation to usage, and intelligent breadth of judgment in the choice of materials and decoration. All the people were at home in these buildings; the museums, the libraries, the theatres, the baths, the laboratories, the halls for reunion and amusement were nothing more than communal houses open to the entire community, and in which a social life was lived freely and fraternally. The experiment of the porticos was always in preparation. The ends of the avenues were closed in with glass, and it was proposed to warm these in the winter, in order to permit quiet exercise during heavy rains and severe cold.

Ragu now began to show signs of surprise, in spite of himself; and Bonnaire, seeing him absolutely lost in astonishment, commenced to laugh.

"Ah! it is no longer very easy to recognize where you are. We are on the old Place de la Mairie, which you remember; that open square whence emerged the four large avenues—the Rue de Brias, the Rue de Formeries, the Rue de Saint-Cron, and the Rue de Magnolles. But as the old building of the Mairie fell into ruins it was demol-

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ished, together with the old school where so many little boys had suffered under the rod. Those large buildings which you see in the square are chemical and physical laboratories where every student is free to come and study and experiment when he thinks he has made some discovery useful to the community. The four streets also are transformed; the hovels have disappeared, trees have been planted, and nothing now remains but the old *bourgeois* houses with their gardens, and these are inhabited by the descendants of us poor workmen of former times, whom marriage has installed there."

After this Ragu naturally found the old fashionable quarter of Beauclair the least changed. Bonnaire, however, was determined to show him in passing the decisive transformations due to the triumph of the new society. The sub-prefecture had been preserved, and two wings in the form of galleries had been added to it in order to provide for a library. In the same way the law court had become a museum, while the prison, with its cells, it had been possible to change without very much expense into a bath-house, where sparkling water poured from the springs.

But as the voiturette was returning and ascending a wide and beautiful road, Ragu began to feel lost once more.

"Where are we now?" said he.

"In the old Rue de Brias," answered Bonnaire. "Ah, yes, its appearance is very much changed. That is because the retail trade, having completely disappeared, the shops were closed, one by one, and the old houses were finally completely demolished, leaving in their place these new buildings, which are so cheerful among the hawthorn and lilac bushes. And there, on the right, they have filled in the Clouque, that poisonous sewer, over which passes the sidewalk of that avenue."

He continued recalling the narrow Rue de Brias, with its pavements always foul from continual trampling of cattle. They passed through the avenue, now free, wide, and healthy, inundated with brilliant sunlight, and having nothing on each side but the homes of happy workers,

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while the crowd was now laughing and singing there with gladness in that bright morning of triumphant holiday.

"But, then," cried Ragu, "if the Clouque flows here under those grassy banks, old Beauclair must be down below, in the place where that new park is, where the white fronts are half hidden under the shade."

This time he remained open-mouthed. It was, indeed, old Beauclair — that sordid collection of hovels, which spread out like a disgusting pool, with its streets that were without daylight and without air, poisoned by a stream in the midst of them. The miserable world of labor had herded together in those nests of vermin and disease, dying there for centuries under the oppression of frightful social iniquity.

Bonnaire was amused at Ragu's astonishment, as he drove him slowly through all the new streets of this happy city of labor. The whole population was beginning to come out in a joyous stream, dressed in light clothing, made of beautiful materials, of kinds formerly very dear, but now at the disposal of every one. And couples were passing by continually — couples who had selected each other for life, and others who had grown old in their tenderness and whose hands were becoming more tightly clasped every new year.

"Where are they all going to at this time?" asked Ragu.

"They are going to call upon each other," answered Bonnaire, "and invite each other to this evening's great dinner, at which you will be present. But just now they are simply enjoying the kindly sun, and living in the open air upon their holiday, because they are happy and feel perfectly at home in their beautiful, friendly streets. Then to-day there are everywhere amusements and games, which are, of course, free, since admission to all public establishments is gratuitous. These troops of children that you see are being taken to the circus, while another part of the crowd is going to public meetings, shows, or musical performances. The theatres are designed to form part of instruction and social education."

Suddenly, as Bonnaire was passing a house whose occu-

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pants were on the point of coming out, he stopped the voiturette.

"Do you wish to visit one of our new houses?" said he. "We are just now at the house of my grandson Félicien; and since he is still here, he will receive us."

Félicien was the son of Severin Bonnaire, who had married Louise, the daughter of Ma Bleue and Achille Gourier. Félicien himself had married, only a fortnight before, Hélène Jollivet, daughter of André Jollivet and Pauline Froment. But when Bonnaire wished to explain these relationships to Ragu the latter made the gesture of a man whose head is bewildered by such a complication of alliances. The youthful housekeeper was very charming. She was very young, very fair, and of the blonde type of beauty, while her husband also was fair, tall, and strong. Their house, where there were as yet no children, spoke eloquently of affection in its furnishings, which were light and cheerful, and its adornments that were simple and of natural elegance.

"Will you dine at our table this evening, my children?" said Bonnaire, in taking leave.

"Oh no, grandfather; it is impossible this time; we are to be at the table of grandmother Morfain. But at dessert we shall be near you."

Ragu got into the voiturette again without saying a word. He had visited the house in silence, though he paused a moment before the little electric motor. He still succeeded in repressing the emotion that must have taken possession of him in the presence of so much happiness. But he ended by protesting anew with his provoking sneer.

"See," cried he, "are these the houses of rich and comfortable *bourgeois,* these houses where, in the largest room, there is a machine? I admit that your workmen are better housed and have had more pleasure since the time that poverty disappeared. But they are still workmen; slaves condemned to labor. Formerly, there were at least a few happy people, the privileged few who did nothing, and all your progress results only in the fact that the entire people are sunk into a common slavery."

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Bonnaire could not help laughing at this cry of despair from the devotee of idleness, whose religion was abolished.

"It should be understood, comrade," said he, "what you mean by slavery. If to breathe, to eat, to sleep, and to live is slavery, then labor is, too. If you live, it is absolutely necessary to work, for you could not live an hour without working. But we will talk of that later. In the mean time we are going back to luncheon, since we shall spend the afternoon in visiting the workshops and the stores."

After their luncheon the inspection was resumed, this time on foot, at a walking pace. They visited all the works and all the bright sunny halls where the steel and copper of the new machines shone like jewels.

"No doubt," Ragu had to concede, "all this is very well, very nice, and very fine; it is better than our dirty holes of old, where we were like pigs in a trough. Progress has certainly been made, but the trouble is that no way has yet been found of giving an income of a hundred thousand francs to each citizen."

"We have that—the income of a hundred thousand francs," said Bonnaire, presently. "Come and see."

He led Ragu to the general stores. These were immense barns, immense storehouses, and immense halls of reserve, where all the wealth of the city was accumulated. These it had been necessary to increase every year. It was no longer possible to find space for the crops, and it had even become necessary to reduce the production of manufactured articles, in order that no encumbrance should occur.

"Here are our incomes," repeated Bonnaire at each new storehouse; "each of us is at liberty to draw upon these without restriction. Do you not think that this represents a hundred thousand francs so far as the happiness of life is concerned? Of course, we are all rich, but this, as you have said, would spoil the pleasure of it for you, since fortune does not count with you unless it is seasoned with the wretchedness of others. Nevertheless, this has one advantage, and that is that one no longer runs the

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risk of being robbed and murdered at night at some street corner."

He then pointed out that a movement was in action outside of the general stores: a direct exchange between one producer and another, proceeding especially from the small workshops and machinery used at home. The large workshops and great social stores would perhaps disappear some day, and that would be still another step towards more liberty and towards the absolute freedom of the individual in an absolutely free humanity.

Ragu listened to him, more and more confused by all that he saw and by this happiness achieved, the existence of which he still wished to deny. Not knowing how to hide his agitation, he cried:

"Then you are an anarchist at present?"

This time Bonnaire laughed outright.

"Oh, my good friend, I was a collectivist, and you once reproached me for not being so any longer. Now you are making me out an anarchist. The truth is that we have been nothing at all since the day when the dream of universal happiness, truth, and justice was realized. And, now that I think of it, come and see something else, in order to conclude our visit."

Then he led Ragu behind the general warehouses, to the lowest part of the slope of the Monts Bleuses, to the place where Lange had of old installed his rudimentary pottery kilns within a wall of dry stone, a sort of barracks of the independent artisan who lives outside of customs and laws. The place was now occupied by an immense building, a large manufactory of earthenware and crockery, from which came the bricks and the enamelled tiles and the thousands of decorations in brilliant colors with which the entire city was ornamented. All this belonged to Lange, who, in accordance with Luc's kindly insistence, had agreed to instruct pupils, after he had seen a little equity shown and odious poverty relieved. Since the people were at last rejoicing in happiness, he also was going to be able to realize his dream, and to produce those brilliant terra-cottas, those golden spikes, those blue-bottles

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and poppies with which he had for a long time wished to adorn the fronts of houses, amid the verdure of the gardens. It seemed to him that a city was building expressly for him, the happy city of workmen set free and ennobled.

Lange was there, just at that moment, standing on the threshold of the manufactory, at the top of the door-steps. Although he was nearly seventy-five years old, he was still robust, and had preserved his small, dumpy figure. He had still the same square, homely head, set in a tangled mass of hair and beard, which were now as white as snow. But his quick eyes shone to the last with bright smiles of the infinite kindness hidden beneath his rough exterior. A troop of children at play surrounded him, boys and girls who pushed forward with extended hands, while he proceeded to distribute little presents, as he was in the habit of doing upon every *fête* day. He gave them thus, as playthings, little clay figures, made with a few movements of the thumb, coarsely colored and baked, but of extreme elegance, and some of them even charmingly comical. They represented the simplest subjects in the world, the occupations of daily life, the habitual acts and fugitive pleasures of each hour, children crying and laughing, young girls keeping house, laborers at work, and life in all its continual and wonderful fruition.

"There, there! look, my children," he was saying; "don't be in such a hurry; there will be enough for everybody! Here, little girl with the fair hair, this is for you, this little girl putting on her stockings! Here, my big boy, this urchin coming home from school is for you! Here, you little brown-hair over there, this blacksmith with his hammer is for you!"

He was calling and laughing and greatly amused in the midst of the happy children, who were disputing about the little men and women, as they called these exquisite figures.

"Ah! take care; you must not break them. Put them in your rooms; that will turn your attention to agreeable lines and pretty colors. Then when you are grown up

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you will love what is beautiful and what is good, and you will be very beautiful and very good yourselves."

This was his theory, that people needed beauty in order to be healthy and kindly. A happy people could not help being an intelligent and harmonious people. Everything in their own houses, everything around them, ought to remind them of beauty; above all, the objects in common use, the utensils and furniture of the whole house. It was through the people that art flourished, to bestow upon them grace and brilliance, which are as necessary to their existence as their every-day bread.

"Here we have a peasant mowing, and here again a woman washing her linen! Here! this is for you, my big girl. Here! this is for you, my little man. That is all; be very good now, and embrace your mammas and papas for me. Come, come, my little lambs, my little chickens; life is beautiful, life is good!"

Ragu, standing motionless, had listened in silence, with an air of increasing surprise. He ended by exclaiming, with his terrible sneer:

"So, then, old anarchist, you no longer talk of blowing up the whole place?"

Lange turned round with a sudden movement and looked at him, but without recognizing him. He did not get angry; he began to laugh.

"Ah," said he, "you know me, you whose name I do not recall. It is very true; I used to wish to blow up the whole concern. I proclaimed that everywhere—to all the winds of the earth, casting my curses on this miserable town, and announcing its approaching destruction by fire and sword. I had even resolved to do justice myself by burning Beauclair as though by a thunderbolt. But what will you have? Things have turned out otherwise. Enough justice has been done already to disarm me. The town is purified and reconstructed, and I certainly cannot destroy it, now that all I have wished and all that I have dreamed is realized. Isn't it so, Bonnaire, that peace has been made?"

And he, the former anarchist, extended his hand to the

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old collectivist, with whom he had once had such furious quarrels.

"We were at daggers' points, then, were we not, Bonnaire? We were quite agreed as to the town of liberty, equity, and good feeling which we wished to establish. But we differed as to the road we must follow to reach it. Those who believed in turning to the right would have murdered all those who desired to turn to the left. Now that we are there it would be very foolish to continue to quarrel, wouldn't it, Bonnaire? Peace is made by unity, by the happiness of all."

Bonnaire, who had held the potter's hand, pressed it, and shook it affectionately.

"Yes, yes, Lange," said he, "we were wrong not to understand each other; that is, perhaps, what prevented our making progress. Or, rather, we were both right, since we are now hand in hand, entirely in accord, recognizing that, in reality, we both wished the same thing."

"And," resumed Lange, "if things do not yet proceed as absolute justice would require, and if entire liberty and love remain to come, it is only necessary to leave it to these boys and girls to continue the work and complete it some day. You understand this, my little chickens, my little lambs? You must love each other well."

The shouts and laughter were recommencing when Ragu intervened again.

"And your Barefoot; say, then, old spoiled anarchist, did you marry her?"

Tears rose suddenly in Lange's eyes. It was now nearly twenty years since this tall, beautiful girl, whom he had picked up out of kindness on the road, and who adored him like a slave, had died in his arms, killed by a terrible accident, the nature of which remained obscure.

Lange advanced roughly towards Ragu.

"You are a reprobate; why do you wring my heart? Who are you? Whence do you come? Don't you know that my dear wife is dead, and that I still ask pardon of her every evening, excusing myself for having killed her? If I have not become a bad man, I owe it to the tender

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recollection of her, for she is with me always; she is my good counsellor. But you, you are wicked; I will not recognize you; I do not wish to know your name. Go—go back where you belong!"

He was superb in his mournful violence. In him, under his roughhewn exterior, the poet that of old indulged in revengeful imaginings of evil portent had now grown tender and become a man of extreme goodness.

"Have you recognized him?" asked Bonnaire, uneasily. "Who is he; tell me?"

"I do not wish to recognize him," repeated Lange, more forcibly. "I will say nothing; let him go away; let him go away at once. He is not fit to be among us."

Bonnaire, persuaded that the potter had recognized Ragu, led the latter quietly away, desirous of avoiding a painful explanation. Ragu followed him in silence, without stopping to quarrel, being visibly disturbed, and, indeed, completely upset. All that he saw, all that he heard, struck him to the heart, and filled him with a bitter regret, an unlimited envy. He began to falter under the sight of so much happiness, in which he was not, and never would be, a partaker.

But it was in the evening, above all, that the festive appearance of Beauclair was too much for him. A custom prevailed that on this first day of summer each family should spread its table near the threshold of the house and dine out-of-doors, under the eyes of the passers-by. This breaking of bread and drinking of wine in public was like a fraternal communion of the entire city. Then the tables were finally brought close together, so as to make but a single one, and the town was thus changed into an immense hall of festivity, in which the people became one single and united family. Mirth prevailed, and the solidarity of honored, solemnized labor was exalted in this community of healthfulness and joy.

Bonnaire insisted that Ragu should take a place at his own table—that is to say, at that of his granddaughter Claudine, who had married Charles Froment, a son of Luc.

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"I bring you a guest," said Bonnaire, simply, without mentioning the latter's name. "He is a stranger, and my friend."

And all responded:

"He is welcome."

Bonnaire kept Ragu near him. But the table was long, and four generations elbowed each other thereat. The patriarch Bonnaire saw there his son Lucien and his daughter-in-law, *née* Louise Mazelle, both of whom had passed their fiftieth year; his granddaughter Claudine and her husband, Charles Froment, in their maturity; and his great-granddaughter Alice, a sweet little girl of eight years. A very complicated relationship followed. He explained that a gigantic table would have been necessary had not his three other children—Antoinette, Zoé, and Severin—accepted invitations to dine at contiguous tables with their own children. He joked about this, and said that at dessert they would call upon one another, so that it would be the same as if they were all together.

Ragu looked especially at Louise Mazelle, who was still pretty and bright with her fine head, like that of a frolicsome goat. The sight of this daughter of the *bourgeois,* who always displayed so much affection for her husband Lucien, the son of a workman, must have surprised him. He leaned forward and asked Bonnaire, in an undertone:

"Are the Mazelles dead, then?"

"Yes, from terror of losing their income. The enormous reduction in the value of stocks and the changes that affected the public funds and foretold approaching ruin fell upon them like so many thunderbolts. The husband was taken first, killed in his love of divine idleness by the idea that he might perhaps be forced to work. The wife lingered for some time, no longer caring for anything, even for her imaginary complaint, and no longer daring to go out, in her obstinate certainty that she would be assassinated in the streets, from the time that investments were attacked. Her daughter did her best to support her mother, but the latter was oppressed at the thought of being dependent upon others, and at last she was found

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black in the face and struck by apoplexy, with her head sunk upon a bundle of her now useless securities. Poor people, they had passed away without understanding, frightened and overwhelmed, accusing the world of turning into an inferno."

Ragu shook his head without any evidence of feeling for these *bourgeois,* although he also, like them, was convinced that a world from which idleness was banished would cease to be habitable. He began again to look around him, depressed by the increasing joyousness of the guests and by the abundance and luxury of the table, both of which seemed things of course, and displaying neither ostentation nor pride. Then a pleasing incident occurred: all the birds of the vicinity—linnets, chaffinches, red-breasts, and sparrows—alighted upon the table before going to sleep in the midst of the dark verdure.

"Ah! here are our little friends!" cried Bonnaire. "How they chatter! they well know that this is a holiday. Alice, crumble up some bread for them."

Ragu, with his gloomy countenance and sorrowful eyes, continued to look at the birds, alighting on all sides in a whirlwind of little light feathers, gilded by the last rays of the sun. They were descending continually from the branches, some of them flying off and then returning. The dessert was enlivened thereby, so many little feet were there hopping briskly about among the cherries and the roses. Nothing since the morning, among all the felicities and splendors they had visited, had shown Ragu, in so charming and so evident a manner, how peaceful and happy was this rising people.

He rose quickly, and said to Bonnaire:

"I am suffocating; I must walk about. And, besides, I wish to see more. I want to see everything—all the tables, all the guests."

Bonnaire understood perfectly. Was it not Luc and Josine whom he wished to see, upon whom his burning curiosity had been fixed ever since his return? Therefore the host, still avoiding a decisive explanation, answered, simply:

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"By all means. I am going to show you everything. We will go and make a tour of the tables."

The first table that they met with, which was in front of the next house, was that of the Morfains. Petit-Da presided at it with his wife, *née* Honorine Caffiaux, both white-haired; there were there his son Raymond and his wife, *née* Thérèse Froment, as well as their eldest child, Maurice Morfain, a tall boy of nineteen years.

The arrival of Bonnaire, who met there once more his youngest son, Severin, was greeted with joyous acclamations. And Ragu, more and more bewildered by these confusing alliances, became entirely lost at the sight of the two Froments seated at this table, Thérèse and Pauline, both unmarried women, now nearing forty, but ever adorable in their bright, healthy beauty. Then the sight of Ma Bleue recalled to him old Mayor Gourier, as well as the old sub-prefect, Châtelard, and he wished to know what had become of them. Ragu looked about.

"Do not all these antagonistic bloods poison each other in the veins in which they now flow?" he exclaimed.

"No," answered Bonnaire, tranquilly. "They are reconciled, and the race has thus acquired more beauty and strength."

A new source of annoyance awaited Ragu at the next table. It was that of his old comrade Bourron, his boon companion in idleness and drunkenness, whom he had dominated and so easily led astray. Bourron happy, Bourron redeemed, while he remained in poverty and torment! And Bourron, in spite of his great age, seemed to triumph, seated by the side of his wife Babette, that eternal rejoicer, whose unalterable hope, whose obstinately blue heaven was now realized without her even condescending to be astonished. Was not this natural? They were happy because they always ended in being happy. In their vicinity the increase of succeeding generations was without limits.

Ragu could not take his eyes off Bourron.

"He looks so young," he murmured; "and his Babette has still her pretty laugh."

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He recalled their old drinking bouts, the comrade who had loitered with him at Caffiaux's, inveighing against bosses, and going home dead-drunk. He recalled his own long life of poverty, the fifty years lost in wandering from workshop to workshop throughout the wide world. At this moment a delightful incident occurred which completed Ragu's misery. Simonne Laboque, the child of Adolphe and of Germaine, and Bourron's great-granddaughter, a fair little girl of five, took from the table in her tiny hands some roses stripped of leaves, and came smiling to shower them upon her great-grandfather's white head.

"Here!" she cried, "grandfather Bourron, look! look once more! These are to make you a crown. There, there! you have some in your hair, some in your ears, on your nose, and you have some everywhere! Happy holiday! happy holiday! grandfather Bourron!"

Every one at table applauded and greeted the patriarch with acclamations. Ragu turned and fled, dragging Bonnaire with him. He was trembling and faltering. Then, after they had gone a short distance, he suddenly asked, in a gloomy tone:

"Listen; what good is it to keep silence any longer? I came here solely to see them. Where are they? Show them to me?"

It was Luc and Josine of whom he was speaking. But since Bonnaire, when he understood, delayed to answer, he continued:

"Ever since this morning you have been taking me about, and I have made believe to be interested in everything; but all the time I was thinking of them only; they alone were haunting me, for it is they alone who have brought me back here, in spite of so much fatigue and suffering. I knew when I was far off that I did not kill him, and that they were both living here still. They are, are they not? They have had a great many children; they are happy and perfectly successful; isn't it so?"

Bonnaire reflected. He had delayed the inevitable meet-

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ing up to this time from dread of a scandal. But had his tactics not been successful? Had they not resulted in inspiring Ragu with a sort of sacred terror before the grandeur of this accomplished work? He seemed to be bewildered and to be seized with a fear that left his hands too weak for any new crime. Therefore he finally answered, with his air of serene kindness:

"You wish to see them, comrade, and I am going to show them to you; it is very true that you will find them happy people."

Luc's table was situated immediately beyond that of Bourron. He himself occupied the centre, with Josine at his right. At his left were Sœurette and Jordan. Suzanne was there also, opposite Luc. Nanet and Nise, who were recent grandparents, had taken their place at his side; their laughing eyes, under their fair hair, now whitened, were just the same as on those far-distant days when they were nothing but playfellows, little curly monkeys. All the descendants surrounded the table. Manual labor, trade, and the soil were represented, and all the social communion whence issued the new city, the Beauclair of justice and of happiness.

At the moment Ragu approached, the last rays of the setting sun were surrounding the table with a halo of glory, and the bouquets of roses, the silver plates, the light silks, and diamond-decked hair of the women sparkled in the midst of so much splendor. But the most striking thing in this good-night from the sun was the haste displayed by all the birds in the neighborhood to descend once again upon these guests before going to sleep in the trees. Such a flight of them appeared, with such a beating of wings, that the table was covered by them, and there was a living snow of little warm feathers. Friendly hands held them, caressed them, and released them. This confidence of the red-breasts and chaffinches was exceedingly pleasing to observe, and celebrated in the calm evening air the alliance that had been established for the future between all beings, that universal peace which reigned between men, beasts, and inanimate objects.

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"Oh, grandfather Luc!" cried the little boy Richard, "see there! grandmother Josine has a bird drinking water out of her glass."

It was true, and Luc, the founder of the town, was amused and touched by it. The water was some of that fresh, pure fluid which he had obtained from among the rocks of the Monts Bleuses, and which he had impounded for the use of the entire town, with its gardens, its avenues, and spouting fountains. He took the glass, and raised it into the light of the sun, saying:

"Josine, we must drink; we must drink to the health of our happy city!"

And when Josine, still loving and tender, with her snow-white hair, had smilingly moistened her lips, he drank in his turn, and resumed:

"To the health of our city, of which to-day is the *fête*. May it always continue to enlarge, and may it increase in liberty, in prosperity, in beauty, and may it convert all the earth to the work of universal harmony."

Standing in the sunlight that surrounded him with a nimbus, Luc was superb in renewed youth, in faith, and in triumphant joy. He spoke simply, without pride or emphasis, of his happiness at seeing his work at last living and a reality. He was the founder, the creator, and the father, and all these rejoicing people and all these guests at all these tables at which they were enjoying the festivities of labor, the fertility of summer, were his people, his friends, his relations, and his continually increasing family, which was becoming always more and more fraternal and prosperous. The wish of ardent tenderness that he expressed for his town arose in the evening air, and echoed from table to table, even to the most distant avenues. Every one stood up, and each, raising his glass to his lips in his turn, drank to the health of Luc and Josine, the hero and heroine, the patriarchs of labor—she the redeemed, glorified as a wife and as a mother; he the redeemer, who, in order to save her, had saved the whole wretched world of the wages system from iniquity and suffering. It was a moment of exaltation and splen-

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dor, the passionate gratitude of the immense crowd, the recompense for so much active faith, the definite entrance into glory and love.

Ragu trembled in all his limbs, shuddering and pale, under the wind of the apotheosis that had just passed by. He could not support the splendor of beauty and of goodness which radiated from Luc and Josine. He drew back and hesitated, and was on the verge of flight when Luc, who had observed him, turned towards Bonnaire, and said:

"Ah, my friend, you were wanting to my joy, for you have been to me a second self, the bravest, the best, the strongest laborer in the work, and they ought not to honor me without honoring you also. Tell me, who is that old man with you?"

"He is a stranger."

"A stranger! Then let him draw near; let him break the bread of our harvests with us, and let him drink of the water of our springs. Josine, make room, and you, friend, whom we do not know, approach and seat yourself between my wife and me, for we wish to honor, in you, all our unknown brothers of other towns all over the world."

Ragu appeared to be seized with mortal terror, and drew back once more.

"No, no! I cannot!"

"Why, then?" asked Luc, gently. "If you have come from afar and you are weary, you will find here succoring and consoling hands. We do not ask your name, nor your past. With us everything is pardoned, and fraternity reigns alone, for the happiness of each leads to the happiness of all. Dear wife, do you also tell him these things, which will seem sweeter and more convincing from your lips, since I, myself, seem to succeed only in frightening him."

Then Josine herself spoke.

"Wait, my friend; here is our glass; why will you not drink to our health and your own? You have come from a distance, and are our brother, and we shall take pleasure in enlarging our family still more. It is the cus-

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tom in Beauclair now upon *fête* days to give the kiss of peace which effaces everything. Take and drink, for love of every one."

But Ragu recoiled anew, more pale and trembling, struck with terror at the sacrilege.

"No, no! I cannot!"

Did Luc and Josine have, at this moment, any suspicion of the truth—did they recognize the miserable creature who had returned, after having so long fulfilled his destiny of idleness and corruption, only to suffer more? They regarded him with their eyes full of kindliness, through which passed a sadness full of the deepest pity. And Luc concluded, simply:

"Do according to your own will, since you cannot be of our family, at the time when the different members of it are approaching each other and when they are pressing closely together, hand in hand. See! see! they are going to mingle; the tables are going to be joined to each other, so that there will soon be one table only for the whole city of brothers."

It was true; the guests were beginning to approach each other; each table seemed to be drawing near the next, and by degrees all were united. It all seemed very natural; the children acted at first as messengers, going from dessert to dessert; then the different members of the same family, scattered through the chain of alliances, had a tendency to unite and to find themselves side by side.

Bonnaire had not interfered, but did not take his eyes off Ragu, expecting to see accomplished in him the change that he expected, after this day in which surprises had staggered him one by one, up to this splendid culmination that terrified and overcame him. He felt that Ragu was so stricken and so wavering that he gave him his hand.

"Come," said he, "let us walk about a little; the evening air is so mild. Tell me, do you believe now in our happiness? You see very plainly that it is possible to work and be happy, for joy, health, and a perfect life are to be found in labor. To labor is simply to live. An experience of suffering and death had been necessary to

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make a curse of labor and to make the idea of paradise that of eternal idleness. Labor is not our master; it is the breath of our lungs, the blood in our veins, our only reason for living, for loving, for producing, for being immortal human beings."

But Ragu, completely defeated, ceased from discussion, as though exhausted with fatigue and weary to the point of death.

"Oh, let me alone; let me alone," said he. "I am only a coward; a child should have had more courage, and I despise myself."

Then, in a low voice, he added:

"I came to kill them both. Ah! the interminable journey, the roads and roads, the years of vague wanderings through unknown countries, with that single passion in my heart, that of returning to Beauclair to find again that man and that woman, and to plunge into each of them the knife of which I made so clumsy a use before! And see how you have beguiled me; see how I have just trembled before them, and drawn back like a coward on seeing them so beautiful, so splendid, and so radiant!"

Bonnaire shuddered at this confession. He had suspected this intended crime the evening before; but now, before the abasement of this miserable object, he felt himself seized with pity.

"Come away, come away, poor fellow; come to my house to sleep this night again. To-morrow we will look about."

"Sleep again in your house? Oh no, no! I am going away. I am going away at once."

"But you cannot set out at this hour; you are too tired, too feeble. Why will you not remain with us? You will come to be at peace, you will understand our happiness."

"Oh no, no! I cannot. I must set out at once, at once. The potter well said that I was not fit for such a home as yours."

And then, in the tone of a condenmed soul in torment, with a deep, smothered rage, he said:

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"I cannot look upon your happiness. I should suffer too much."

Thenceforward Bonnaire insisted no further, being himself invaded by a secret uneasiness and horror. He took Ragu back to his house in silence, for the latter wanted to get his knapsack and his stick, without wishing to wait until the end of the meal. Not a word was exchanged, not a gesture of farewell. Bonnaire watched this man, old, miserable, and stricken, setting forth with a faltering step, and disappearing in the distance in the night which was gradually descending.

But Ragu was not able to flee from Beauclair in its festivities all at once. He slowly remounted the Brias gorge, and climbed painfully, step by step, among the rocks of the Monts Bleuses.

He now looked down upon the town, and as he turned took it all in at a glance. And he heard the laughter and the songs ascend; he was still taking part in that immense *fête* of this entire people assembled there like one single, fraternal family.

Then he wished to fly once more; he ascended still higher, and when he turned again it was to find the city even more resplendent. The laughter and songs by which the great human family celebrated the joy of labor on the fruitful earth reached him even more clearly. He set forth for the last time, and he walked long, long, until at length he was lost in the darkness.

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MORE years rolled by, and inevitable death, the trusty worker of eternal life, completed its labors by carrying away one by one the persons who had accomplished their task. Bourron went first, and then his wife Babette, whose gay disposition showed itself up to her last breath. Then followed Petit-Da and Ma Bleue, she of the deep, celestial blue eyes. Lange died while finishing his last figure, that of a lovely girl with naked feet, in the likeness of Barefoot. Nanet and Nise went off in an embrace while still young. Finally, Bonnaire succumbed like a hero, and suddenly, as though a prey to the bustle of labor. He died one day when he had gone to the workshops to witness the operation of an immense hammer, each stroke of which forged one piece.

Of all their generation, of all the founders and creators in triumphal Beauclair, Luc and Jordan remained alone, beloved and surrounded by the affectionate cares of Josine, Sœurette, and Suzanne. The three women, of miraculous health and strength for their age, were their assistants and supporters at every hour. Luc was now gradually losing the use of his limbs, he walked with difficulty, and was confined almost entirely to an arm-chair. Ever since this had been the case Suzanne had come to live at his house, sharing with Josine the sad honor of waiting upon him. He was nearly eighty years old, but his cheerfulness was unvarying; his intelligence remained intact, and he would be, as he said, still young were it not for his cursed legs, which had become like lead. Sœurette, in her turn, did not leave her brother Jordan, who was still always employed in his laboratory, where he now slept, and whence he no longer emerged. He was Luc's

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senior by ten years, but in spite of his age he had preserved the slow, methodical activity by which he accomplished his immense labors, unceasing even now at the close of his existence—labor so logical and so determined that he was still able to work, at nearly a hundred, although the other and most reliable workers of his generation had long since slept beneath the sod.

He had often said, in his feeble voice:

"Those who die do so because they wish to die; no one dies as long as he has something to do. I am not in good health, but I shall live to be very old, and shall die only upon the day when my work is finished. You will see, you will see! I shall know it very well, and I will warn you, my good friends, by saying to you: 'Good-night! my day is done; I am going to sleep.'"

Jordan therefore still labored, because he had not, according to himself, finished his work. He lived always wrapped up in his blankets; he drank warm water for fear of taking cold; he took long periods of repose, reclining on a couch, between the rare hours that he could give to his investigations.

In Jordan's opinion his work would be completed only on the day when he should have given to the new city beneficent electricity, without measurement, to be used at will, like the water which pours in an inexhaustible flood from the river, or like the air which each person is free to breathe at discretion. For nearly sixty years he had been doing much towards reaching such a result, and by successive stages had solved the problems that appeared upon the way. At first he had exercised his ingenuity to reduce the expenses of carriage by burning coal under boilers as it came from the shaft, and by transmitting the power thus obtained to various works by cable, without much waste. Then he devised the apparatus, so long sought for, and succeeded in directly transforming the caloric energy contained in coal into electrical energy without passing through mechanical energy. Then the idea occurred to him that it was possible, and even certain, that coal-mines would eventually become exhausted.

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Should coal fail in less than a century, would it not prove the death of the present world, the stoppage of all industries, the suppression of means of locomotion, and the stagnation of humanity? Each ton of this coal that he could not do without he saw burn with uneasiness, saying to himself that that was one ton less. Therefore he returned to work, and had already been laboring at this problem more than ten years.

But he was haunted by another idea, which gradually took entire possession of him and threw him into a profound dream that ended by being itself his complete work, through the thought that it would give happiness to the world if it were realized.

Jordan, who was so emaciated and so chilly, had always had a passion for the sun. He followed it on its course, and he looked at it each evening when it sank to rest with fear and horror of the advancing darkness; and in the morning he sometimes rose very early for the joy of seeing it return. The sun was the eternal source of life, because it was the source of light, heat, and motion. Why, therefore, should not the sun continue and complete his own work?

Jordan succeeded in solving the problem. The good and glorious sun allowed him to appropriate a little of his inexhaustible flame, with which he had been warming the earth for so many ages. After the final experiments works were erected and set in operation, which furnished Beauclair with electricity for a whole year, and as much as the inhabitants needed, just as the springs of the Monts Bleuses were furnishing them with water. But there was still one great trouble, and that was that the immense reservoirs wasted a great deal, and there was, therefore, a final improvement to be made by means of which sufficient solar rays might be perfectly stored up to light another sun above the city during the long nights of December.

Jordan set himself to work once more. He still sought and struggled, always resolved to live until his work should be complete. The day at length came. He had

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found a method of preventing any loss, and of rendering the reservoirs impermeable and capable of preserving the supply of electric power for a long time. This having been done, he had only one more wish, and that was to say good-bye to his work, to embrace his friends, and then to enter into universal life.

It was now October, and the sun was still imparting to the last leaves a bright, warm, golden hue. Jordan requested Sœurette to have him carried for the last time in an arm-chair to the works, where the new reservoirs had just been installed. He wished to verify there his triumphant work, that of collecting and preserving enough of the sun's power to enable Beauclair to await the approaching spring. On a delightful afternoon he was taken to the works and passed two hours visiting everything and regulating the proper action of the apparatus. The works were constructed at the very foot of the slope of the Monts Bleuses, in that part of the ancient park which was exposed to the full mid-day sun, and which its light had formerly made a paradise teeming with fruits and flowers. The vast structures were dominated by towers that were united by immense roofs of steel and glass, without any portion of the apparatus being visible outside, as all the cables and conductors of power passed underground. Then Jordan completed his visit by stopping for another moment in the central court, where he cast one last long look around him, on this new world, this source of eternal life, his creation, the passion of his entire existence. He turned towards Sœurette, who had not quitted him, but had followed, step by step, the arm-chair in which the two men transported him.

"Now, then," said he, with a smile, "it is finished, and all is well. Now I can go. Let us return home, sister."

He was very cheerful and radiant at having seen his work complete and in order, like a good workman who goes at last to seek repose. But as his sister, for the sake of exercise on this beautiful morning, had given the men orders to make a detour, he found himself all at once, on coming out of an avenue, before the cottage of Luc, who

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also was infirm by reason of his paralyzed lower limbs, which prevented his going out. The two friends had not been able to see each other for several months. They had been reduced to correspondence, and had news of each other only through their loving guardians, their good angels, who were always on the road from one to the other. One wish still, the last of his heart, arose in the dying man, out of the peaceful sleep that began to take possession of him.

"Oh! I beg of you, sister, let me stop under that tree at the border of those tall plants. Go up at once to Luc's room, and tell him that I am passing by, and am here, before his door, expecting him."

Sœurette, surprised and a little uneasy in regard to the great emotion of such an interview, hesitated a moment.

"But, my dear, Luc is like yourself; he does not move; how could he come down?"

Jordan once more smiled his kindly smile, by which his eyes were reanimated.

"He can be brought down, sister. Since I have come to him in my arm-chair, he can very well come to me in his."

And he added, tenderly:

"It is very delightful here, and we will talk for the last time and will say our farewells. How can we part forever without having embraced each other?"

It was impossible for Sœurette to refuse further, and she went up to Luc's room. Jordan awaited her tranquilly in the soft light of the setting sun. His sister soon reappeared and announced the coming of his friend. A profound emotion passed over Jordan when Luc appeared in his turn, also in an arm-chair carried by two men. He advanced slowly over the grass, followed by Josine and Suzanne, who never left him. Then the men deposited him near Jordan, with the arm-chairs touching each other, so that the two friends were able to clasp and press each other's hands.

"Ah, my good Jordan, how I thank you! how good this is of you, this thought of our meeting once more and bidding each other farewell!"

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"You should have come to my house, my good Luc. Since I was passing and you were here, it was so simple that we should meet again for the last time amid these plants, under one of our own dear trees, whose shade we have so much loved."

The tree was a silver linden, a superb giant, already half stripped of its leaves. But the sun was still gilding it, and beams of light were streaming through its branches. The evening was exquisite, and a deep silence reigned. A great sunbeam flooded the two aged men with a soft light, while the three women, standing in the rear, seemed to be hovering over them with solicitude.

"Think then, my friend!" resumed Jordan, "we have spent our lives, during so many years, in labor side by side! We have ended by being to some degree part of each other! And I should be overwhelmed with remorse if I had not already forgiven myself for having believed so little in your work in the beginning, when you came to me, asking my aid to construct the future city of justice. I was convinced at that time of your failure."

Luc began to laugh.

"Yes, yes, my friend; as you say, political, economical, and social struggles were not your affair. No doubt there had been many vain agitations among men. But what of that! Was it not necessary that facts should no longer be confused, and that evolution should be allowed to accomplish itself without hastening the hour of its deliverance? All the compromises that are sometimes necessary, all the base efforts made by leaders of men, have their excuse in the fact that they sometimes succeed in accomplishing double stages of progress."

Jordan quickly interrupted him.

"You were right, my friend, and you have proved yourself so to me magnificently. Your efforts here have hastened and stimulated those of all the world. It may be that you have gained a hundred years upon poverty, upon human suffering, and this new town, this regenerated Beauclair of to-day, where the utmost justice and the utmost happiness now flourish, testifies to the worthiness

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of your mission and the beneficent kindness of your labor. You are witness that I am with you, with all my mind and all my heart, and I should not want to leave you without telling you how you have conquered me by your efforts and with what increasing affection I have followed you in all that you have just realized that is humane and great. You have often been an example to me."

Then Luc exclaimed, protestingly:

"Oh, my friend, do not let us speak of me as an example. It is you who have given me continually the highest, the most magnificent one! Do you remember my weariness, my former discouragement, when I always found you erect, with the greatest courage, the strongest faith in your work, even in the days when all certainty seemed crumbling around you? Your invincible strength has lain in believing in nothing but work, and putting into that belief, the only salvation, the only reason for action and life. Your work has thus become your very heart and brain, the blood that flows in your veins, the thought that watches unceasingly at the bottom of your intelligence. Work is your sole existence; it beats with all the life that you impart to it hour by hour. Moreover, what an imperishable monument, what a magnificent gift of happiness you are going to bequeath to men! My own work as constructor of the town and shepherd of the people would certainly never have succeeded and would still be of no avail if yours had not existed."

There was silence; a flight of birds passed overhead, and as the autumn sun sank lower in the heavens it inundated the bare branches with a more tender sweetness. Sœurette's maternal instinct caused her to become uneasy. She replaced the coverings over Jordan's knees, while Josine and Suzanne hung over Luc, fearful of his being fatigued. At last he resumed:

"Science remains the great revolutionist. That you told me in the beginning, and each step forward of our long existence has convinced me how right you were. Would this Beauclair of comfort and community of interests have been already possible if you had not put at

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my disposal electrical energy, this agent which has become necessary to all labor, to all social life? Truth and science alone will emancipate man more and more, and make him master of his destiny and give him the sovereignty of the world by reducing the forces of nature to the part of docile servants. While it was I who built, my friend, it was you who gave me the means to breathe life into my mortar and stones."

"It is true," answered Jordan, in his gentle, tranquil voice, "science will emancipate man, for truth is really the most powerful, and, indeed, the only worker for fraternity and justice. I am going to depart content. I have just made my last visit to our works, which will now continue to act as I would wish, for the relief and happiness of all."

He continued to talk, giving explanations and instructions as to the operation of the new apparatus and the future employment of these inexhaustible reservoirs of power, as if he were dictating to his friend his last wishes. This was his will and testament, all the joy and all the peace that could be drawn from his scientific labors. Electricity was already so abundant and so very cheap that it was given to the inhabitants at their pleasure, like water from the springs whose streams never dried up, or like the open air coming freely from the four corners of the horizon. In this respect, if in no other, it was life itself.

The applications of electricity were numberless; each day gave birth to some new benefit. Even transportation, locomotion, and simple traffic in the populous streets were becoming more easy, thanks to that power supplied without cost, applied to an infinite number of vehicles, such as bicycles, voiturettes, wagons, and trains of cars.

"I shall depart content," repeated Jordan, with his air of serene cheerfulness. "I have finished my task, and I find that the work is sufficiently advanced to permit me to sleep in peace. In the near future, aërial navigation will be established, and man will have conquered space, as he has conquered the ocean. In the future he will be

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able to correspond from one end of the earth to the other, without wires or cables. Human words and human deeds will make the tour of the world with the swiftness of lightning. And, my friend, this is certainly that deliverance of the people by science, the great invincible revolutionist which will bring them continually more peace and truth.

He was becoming tired, and his voice was growing very feeble. Yet he was still cheerful, as he concluded:

"You see, my friend, I was as revolutionary as yourself."

"I know it, my friend," answered Luc, with touching tenderness. "You have been my master in all things, and I can never thank you sufficiently for your admirable lessons in energy, for your superb faith in labor and what it can accomplish."

The sun was setting, and a slight tremor had just passed through the branches of the great linden tree, through which the rays of the star of day were falling paler. The night was approaching, and a delicious repose was slowly invading the stately foliage. The three women, still standing, ever silent and attentive, became uneasy, much as they respected this last interview, the emotion of which held them spellbound. They interfered with gentleness, without words, but with a simple maternal gesture.

Then, as Josine and Suzanne were covering Luc in his turn, he said, quietly:

"I am not cold; the evening is so beautiful."

But Sœurette had turned to look at the sun, which, having reached the horizon, was on the point of disappearing, and Jordan followed her glance.

"Yes, night is falling," resumed he. "The sun may rest, but it leaves us its goodness and its strength in our storehouses. And this time when he goes to rest my day also will be done. I am going to go to sleep. Farewell, my friend."

"Farewell, my friend," repeated Luc. "I also shall soon sleep."

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These were their adieux; of exquisite tenderness and of extraordinary simple grandeur. Both knew that they would never see each other again, that they were exchanging their last glances and speaking their last words. After sixty years, in which their lives had been spent in a common effort, they were now separating, to be reunited only in the stream of generations, the humanity of the future, whose happiness they had hastened.

"Farewell, my friend," said Jordan, once more. "Do not be sad; death is good and necessary. We live again in others; we remain thus immortal. We have already given ourselves to them; we have labored only for them, and we shall be born again in them; we shall thus have our part in our own work. Farewell, my friend."

And Luc once more repeated:

"Farewell, my friend; all that is to remain of us will tell how we have loved and how we have hoped. Each human being is born to do his task; life has no other reason; every time that nature needs another workman she puts into the world another human being, and when the workman's day is done, he can go to rest; the earth will receive him again for other needs. Farewell, my friend."

He leaned forward, wishing to kiss Jordan, but was unable, and the three loving women were obliged to aid and support them in this last embrace. They laughed like children, and displayed cheerfulness and an admirable serenity in this supreme hour of separation, experiencing neither regrets nor remorse, since they had faithfully done their duty, their task as men. They had even less to fear in the future; they were without terror of the death awaiting them, for they were secure of the great calm in which good workmen sleep. They embraced each other very tenderly, and lingeringly put all that remained to them of breath into this kiss.

"Farewell, my good Jordan."

"Farewell, my good Luc."

Then they spoke no more. The silence became profound and sacred. The sun disappeared from the wide heavens behind the dim and distant line of the horizon. In the

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great linden tree a bird became silent, the branches of the trees disappeared in the darkness, the tall grasses and the entire park, with its old trees, walks, and lawns, sank into the delightful peace of evening.

Then, upon a sign from Sœurette, the two men raised Jordan's arm-chair, and bore him away with a slow and gentle step. Luc, sitting motionless in his own, had insisted by a gesture that they should leave him under the tree a moment longer. He gazed after his friend as the latter was borne down the wide, straight walk. The walk was a long one, and the arm-chair gradually diminished in size. There was one moment when Jordan turned round for the last time, and one more glance, together with a half-extinguished laugh, were exchanged. All was over, and Luc saw the arm-chair vanish from his sight, while the entire park sank into slumber, and became enveloped in the increasing darkness. Upon re-entering his laboratory, Jordan lay down. He was so delicate and so weak at his great age that his stature seemed reduced to that of a child. As he himself had said, his work being finished and his day ended, he was willing that death should claim him; and the next day he died, very peacefully, in Sœurette's arms.

Luc was to live another five years in the arm-chair, which he seldom quitted, and which was placed near the window of his room, whence he saw his city each day becoming larger and more complete. A week after Jordan's death, Sœurette had come to join Josine and Suzanne at Luc's side, so that there were thereafter three to surround him with their tenderness and care. All this care for him was the superb and boundless harvest of all the love that he had sown, with lavish hands, over the entire earth around him, the results of which were to-day increasing with extraordinary abundance under the sun.

During his long hours of happy contemplation before his prosperous city, Luc often lived his past over again. He saw once more his point of departure, from long ago reading an unpretentious little book containing an abstract of Fourier's doctrine. He recalled the sleepless night,

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during which, feverishly revolving thoughts of his still obscure mission, his brain and heart had been prepared to receive the good seed, as he had begun to read in order to find sleep. Thus, starting from Fourier's experiment, the new city was at each stage to reform itself, to advance towards more liberty and justice, and to make a conquest upon its way of socialists, hostile sects, collectivists, and even of anarchists, in order to end by grouping them all into a family of brothers, reconciled by the realization of a common ideal, in the kingdom of heaven fulfilled at last upon earth.

The triumphant spectacle that Luc had now always before his eyes, that city of happiness, the gayly colored roofs of which were spread out before his window, was admirable. The march of progress which a former generation, sunk in ancient error, and contaminated by an iniquitous environment, had so mournfully begun in the midst of many obstacles and former hatreds, was to be pursued by their children, instructed and disciplined by the schools and workshops, advancing with a cheerful step, even to the attainment of aims formerly declared chimerical. The long effort of struggling humanity resulted in the free expansion of the individual, in a society completely satisfied; in man being fully man, and living his life in its entirety. The happy city was thus realized in the religion of life; the religion of humanity, freed at length from dogmas, it became in itself all glory and all joy.

But Luc was present at a triumph of Labor—labor the savior of mankind, creator and regulator of the social world. From the first he had desired to see the death and disappearance of the iniquitous wage-system, which he held to be the source of poverty and suffering, the rotten basis of the old social edifice, which was crumbling in all directions. He had dreamed of something different in his reorganization of labor, a new arrangement which would further a just division of the wealth acquired by labor. But by how many stages it had been necessary to advance before this dream could become reality in the happy city he had founded!

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Authority was at an end; the new social system had no other foundation than the tie of labor, accepted as necessary by all, their law and the object of their worship. A number of groups adopted the new system, breaking off from the old groups of builders, dealers in clothing, metal-workers, artisans, and farm laborers, each group increasing in number, each different, each making itself essential to the rest, and satisfying individual wants as well as the needs of the community. Nothing impeded any man's expansion; a citizen working as a laborer might unite himself with as many groups as he thought proper.

Luc laughed with delight when a morning breeze brought him the sound of song and laughter from his city. What a happy thing was work now that it had been made easy and delightful!

Luc had no further fears about the future of his city. He looked on it, as it grew day by day, as if it were a beautiful, strong creature, endowed with eternal youth. It had reached down to Brias, between the two promontories of the Monts Bleuses, and was now extending over the plain of Roumagne. On fine days the white fronts of its houses seemed to smile in the midst of verdure, and no smoke marred the clearness of the air, for chimneys had been abolished, and electricity had everywhere replaced wood and coal.

And in the city all was love. A pervading sense of love, increasing, wholesome, purifying, became the perfume and the sacred flame of daily life. Love, general and universal, had its birth in youth; then it passed on and became mother love, father love, filial love; it spread to relations, to neighbors, to fellow-citizens, to all men upon earth, and as its waves swept on and became stronger, it seemed to become a great sea of love, bathing the shores of the whole earth. Charity—that is, love of one's neighbors—was like the fresh air which fills the lungs of all who breathe it; everywhere there was this feeling of brotherly love; love alone had proved able to realize the unity men had so long dreamed of, bringing all into divine harmony. The human race, at last as well balanced

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as the planets in their orbits by the law of attraction, the laws of justice, solidarity, and love, would go joyfully on its round through the ages of eternity. Such was the harvest ever renewed and renewing, the great harvest of tenderness and loving kindness, that Luc every morning saw growing up around him in spots where he had sown his seed so bountifully in his early days. In his whole city, in his school-rooms, in his workshops, in each house, and almost in each heart, for many years he had been sowing the good seed with lavish hands.

"Just look! just look!" he sometimes said in the morning when Josine, Sœurette, and Suzanne stood together round his easy-chair, placed before the open window of his room. "Just look! The trees have put forth fresh buds since last evening, and it seems to me as if kisses were flying about over the roofs like little singing birds. Look down to right and left; don't you see love on the wing in the light of sunrise?"

All three laughed as he spoke, for they loved to humor him.

"Of course we do," said Josine. "I see over there, on that house with blue tiles and white stars, a ray of sunshine which tells us that there is great joy within. There must be lovers there—people who have passed a happy night."

"And look opposite," said Sœurette, "on the bright façade of that other house, with its white tiles, ornamented with roses, how the windows shine, as if a star were rising. A child must just have been born there."

"And everywhere, over all houses in the whole city," said Suzanne, "the rays of the sun are falling and gathering themselves together like ears of golden corn in a field of brotherly affection, which is wonderful for its fertility. Does not that mean peace for all, and love for all, which every day is springing up in our dear town, and will be harvested in the future?"

Luc listened to them with delight. What a delicious reward it was for him; what an adorable gift of love they gave him, as in his extreme old age they surrounded

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him with tokens of sublime affection—these three women whose presence made sunny and fragrant his last days on earth. Nowhere else had love brought forth so magnificent a harvest; in his own house, around his own chair, love had results most profuse and most delightful. Three women adored him. They watched over him every hour with solicitude, they worshipped him with affection and devotion, providing for all his little wants with tender care. They were all infinitely kind and good, and infinitely tender. Each had a serene look which showed that she was glad to be alive, and to be able, with gentle hands, to support him to the entrance of the tomb. They were all three very old. Their hair was white, as was their complexion, but they were as light as phantoms. They had all grown venerable, and were like pure flames, bright and cheerful, flames kindled upon the altar of youthful but most constant love felt for the old man whom they now waited upon. He was still living, and therefore they wanted to live. They supplied him with strength, activity, and knowledge of what was going on around him. They were always there, always in good health and good preservation, going and coming on his behalf, for he was not able to rise. They were his guardians and his housekeepers, his companions who seemed to prolong his long existence, which had now overpassed the limits usually allotted to man.

Josine, at seventy-eight, was the one he had loved, the Eve whom he had rescued from a fall and from suffering. She was very slight; but like a withered flower that retains its perfume, she had kept her supple gracefulness and her delicate charm. In bright sunshine her white hair would sometimes show something of the tint of gold, so beautiful in her youth. And Luc continued to adore her, even as he had done upon that far-off day when he had succored her, loving in her the suffering people, and having selected her as the most wretched and the most unhappy in order to save with her, if he saved her, all the abandoned of this world suffering through disgrace and hunger. He often kissed fervently her hand which had

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been mutilated by cruel labor, in that penitentiary of wage-earners, whence his pity and his love for her had prompted him to rescue others. To complete his mission of redemption and deliverance, he had felt the necessity of being aided by a wife; without her he could not be strong and complete, nor able to redeem his fellows. It was from the union of man and woman, from the fruit of their love, that a new generation must be born into the world. When Josine had borne him children he felt his work would go on from generation to generation. She, too, adored him. She loved him, as she had done from the day that they first met, with a flame of tender gratitude. She gave herself to him body and soul, and age had not extinguished or diminished her love.

Sœurette, who was of the same age as Luc, being almost eighty-five, was the most active of the three women. She was on her feet morning and night, and she was always busy. She had not seemed to grow older for many years. Always slender, she was now still more ephemeral, but had certainly grown handsomer in her old age. She had formerly been dark, thin, and unlovely, but had now become an exquisite little old lady, a white mouse, as it were, with brilliant eyes. Long ago, in the painful crisis of her love for Luc, when she felt what it was to love and not be loved, her good brother had told her that in time she would become resigned, and make others happy by the sacrifice of herself. She had daily become more resigned, and her renouncement had ended by giving her pure joy—by being a spring of divine happiness.

Suzanne, now eighty-eight, was the eldest of the three women, the most serious and the most venerable. She was not tall, but she carried herself erect, with a soft, tender face, the only charm of which in youth had been its look of goodness and intelligence. But she was no longer able to walk, though her eyes showed how anxious she was to be helpful to others, and to be active in good works. She might generally be found sitting beside Luc. She kept him company, while the two others, Josine and Sœurette, hurried about, trotting noiselessly through the room,

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or stood near their dear old invalid, who sat smiling in his easy-chair. Suzanne, too, had loved him in the days of her sad youth, but her love was long unknown to herself.

Thus Luc, now very old, very tall, and handsome still, was ending his life beloved by three women who, like himself, were old, but handsome in old age. He, with his tall form not yet bent by the weight of years, was strong and in good health—as sound as an oak. Only his legs had swollen. They had become stiff and unserviceable, so that he was nailed to his seat before his window, ever looking with delight on the city he had founded. Over his brow stood up a cluster of thick hair, for age had not brought baldness; but his head was now quite white, and his hair was a mane, like that of an old lion. The last days of his life were perfumed by the tender love of those around him, Josine, Sœurette, and Suzanne. He had long loved them. He loved all three of them, and they rejoiced in his great love, in which they perceived such brotherly kindness, such goodness. Love was a river in which his life flowed on to its close, and the woman he had passionately loved and his dear friends he now folded to his heart with equal pressure, and found in their love for him and in his for them fresh life and joy in living.

But there were signs that the end was drawing near. Like Jordan, Luc felt that, his work being now done, he must go away from earth. He felt sleep beginning to overcome him and rest to be at hand; he had deserved it, and now he joyfully looked forward to it. He saw death draw near, and welcomed it; he knew it to be necessary, and thought it would give him a gentle summons. Good man as he was, spending his life to ameliorate the lot of others, he had lived more for earth than heaven. He believed in an immortality to be found in his work, carried on after his death by his children and grandchildren; and he was happy in thinking that because he had lived men of the future would be better and more happy. So Josine, Sœurette, and Suzanne, seeing him so sweetly falling asleep, could not be sad. Every morning they opened

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his windows that the sun he loved might freely enter, and they dressed his room with fragrant flowers. Besides this, well knowing his delight in children, they wanted him constantly to see some of them around him; little lads and lasses with their fair curls or their brown locks, who were like other flowers, buds now, but to be all strength and beauty in later years. And when these little folks were in his room, laughing and playing round his easy-chair, Luc would smile tenderly, watching their romps with an air of amusement, and delighted that his life would end in so much hope and gayety.

But the day of his death kept coming near. The three women who saw it approaching, by the look in the clear eyes of the old man, sent for his little great-grandchildren, the sight of whom, in his last moments, would most remind him of his youth and speak most to him of the future. These children brought with them older ones, their playfellows, descendants of the workmen whose united efforts had years before founded La Crêcherie. The sunny chamber was a charming sight, full of children and of roses, among which sat the hero, the old lion with his silvery mane, still interested in these little ones, looking at once moved and delighted. He recognized them all, called them by name, and asked them questions.

A great lad of eighteen, François, son of Hippolyte Mitaine and Laure Fauchard, looked at him with two great tears in his eyes, which he was trying to conceal. Luc called him.

"Come and press my hand, my fine François," said he. "You must not be sorry; you see that we all feel satisfied. Be a brave man. How you have grown! Some day you will make a splendid lover."

The next to whom he spoke were two young girls about fifteen—Amélie, the daughter of Alexandre Feuillat and Clémentine Bourron, and Simonne, whose parents were Adolphe Laboque and Germaine Yvonnot.

"Ah! you are always merry, you two beautiful girls, and that is right. Come here and let me kiss you on your

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fresh young cheeks; and be always gay and beautiful, for that makes people happy."

After that he spoke to none of them but his own descendants, who had increased and multiplied rapidly. Two of his grandchildren were there—Alice, a young girl of eighteen, daughter of Charles Froment and Claudine Bonnaire, and a grandson of sixteen, Richard, whose father was Jules Froment and his mother Céline Lenfant. Josine and Sœurette had sent for the girls and boys only; the room would have been too full had the fathers and mothers come with their children. Luc laughed tenderly as he called Alice and Richard up to him.

"My pretty Alice," said he, "you are almost old enough to be married; look out for some young man who has good health and is as handsome as yourself. Ah! you have seen to that already? Love each other much, have healthy, handsome children. And you, my big Richard, I hear that you are going to be apprenticed in the shoemaking shop. I am told that what you take most interest in is music, of which you are passionately fond. Work hard at the shop, and then enjoy your music. Cultivate your genius, if you have any, my boy."

At this moment four very little children came in. They were three boys and a girl, Luc's great-grandchildren, who tried to climb up on his knees. He began by lifting up the eldest, Georges, who was seven, the son of Maurice Morfain and Berthe Jollivet, who were cousins, one the son of Raymond Morfain and Thérèse Froment, the other the daughter of André Jollivet and Luc's daughter Pauline.

"Ah!" said the great-grandfather, "my good little Georges, dear grandson of my two daughters, Thérèse the brunette and Pauline the blonde! You used to have eyes like my Pauline, and now they are getting to be like those of Thérèse! And your pretty mouth with its smile—is it like that of my Thérèse, or is it Pauline's? Give me a good kiss, a hearty kiss, my dear little Georges, that you may remember for a long, long time how you have seen me."

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Then it was the turn of Grégoire Bonnaire, who was younger than Georges, being hardly five. He was the son of Félicien Bonnaire and of Hélène Jollivet, the first child of Severin Bonnaire and Léonie Gourier; her mother was the second daughter of André Jollivet and Pauline Froment.

"So you are another little man belonging to my Pauline! Tell me, Grégoire, is not grandmamma Pauline very charming, with her hands always full of nice things? And you love me, too, your great-grandpapa, my Grégoire. You want to be a good boy always, do you not? Think of that when you think of me. Kiss me; give me a good hearty kiss."

Afterwards he took up the two youngest, Clement and Luce, brother and sister, setting one on his right knee, the other on his left. Clement was five, Luce only two. They were the children of Ludovic Boisgelin and Mariette Froment. But in them there was great mingling of the blood of those we have before known in this narrative. Ludovic was the son of Paul Boisgelin and of Antoinette Bonnaire, and Mariette was the daughter of Hilaire Froment and Colette, the charming eldest daughter of Nanet and Nise. They were thus descended from the Delaveaus, the Boisgelins, the Bonnaires, and the Froments, with their fair foreheads and their pretty curls.

"Come, come, little Clement and little Luce, my darlings. If you could only know all that I recall as I look into your bright eyes! Little Clement, you are a good boy and a strong boy. Oh, I know; I have heard all about you from grandpapa Hilaire, who is always so glad to hear you laughing. And you, my little Luce, you dear little atom, who can hardly talk, I know you are a brave little woman, for you never cry, and you lift up your plump little fists to the bright sun. You must kiss me, both of you, my handsome, darling children. You are the best things I shall leave behind; in you will be my strength and hope when I am gone."

The others had drawn near, and he would have been glad to have arms long enough to enfold all of them and

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to press them to his heart. To them he entrusted the future; he put his work into their hands, as if they were new forces which might carry it on and enlarge that work by-and-by. He had always looked to children, to generations yet unborn, to complete the work of happiness. And those dear children sprung from himself, now standing round him in this last hour—an hour of peace—what a legacy of justice, virtue, and happiness he was about to leave them! How earnestly and passionately he looked to them to realize his dream of the human race made day by day more free and more happy!

"Now, then, my darlings, be good, be honest, and be always kind! Remember how you have all kissed me today, and love me always, but love one another, too. You will some day know what we have accomplished, and you will do as we have done; and your children in their turn will do as their fathers did with labor, energy, and much love! Meantime, dear children, go away now and play, and be always healthy and very merry."

Josine, Sœurette, and Suzanne wanted to send the children home, for fear that they might make too much noise, since they saw that Luc was gradually growing weaker; but he would not let them go. He wanted to keep the children near him, and to die with the sound of their merry laughter in his ears. It was therefore settled that they might all play under his window in the garden. He heard them and could see them and was content.

The sun was sinking below the horizon, a bright, beautiful summer sun, which had lit up the whole city, and still shone into the chamber of death, which seemed touched up with gold. Luc, in this splendor, seated in his easy-chair, remained long without speaking, his eyes fixed upon the wide horizon. There was deep silence. Josine and Sœurette did not speak; they knelt, one on each side of his chair, while Suzanne, seated beside him, seemed like him to be in a deep reverie. He spoke at last, in a slow voice, which seemed as if it came from afar:

"Yes, our city is yonder. Beauclair regenerated sparkles in the sunshine and has a pure atmosphere; I

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know, too, that neighboring places—Brias, Magnolles, Formeries, and Saint-Cron—have followed our example and have been rebuilt and reorganized. But yonder, beyond the Monts Bleuses, there are other places, and farther still, beyond the termination of the great plain of Roumagne, there lies a vast world, in the provinces and countries of which nations are engaged in a fierce struggle as they march onward towards the happy city."

He was again silent and absorbed in thought. He very well knew that the changes he had inaugurated at La Crêcherie and Beauclair were going on in other places everywhere with increased rapidity. The movement begun in manufacturing towns soon spread to the provinces, then to the whole nation, then to neighboring countries. There were no more frontiers, no more chains of mountains, no more impassable oceans; deliverance was flying from one continent to another, sweeping away superstition, and drawing all peoples together.

Finally Luc again spoke, in a weak voice:

"Ah, yes; would that I could know before giving up my work how far its great end has by this time been accomplished! I think that I should sleep better and should take with me into the grave more certainty and hope."

There was another silence. Josine, Sœurette, and Suzanne sat, as he did, looking, as it were, into the future.

At last Josine spoke:

"I have heard something. A traveller has told me that in a great republic the collectivists have become the masters of power. They have for years been fighting bloody political battles to gain possession of the legislative assembly and of the government. Legally, they could not succeed, but had to make a *coup d'état,* after they felt that they were strong enough, and were certain of a strong support in the people. As soon as the revolution succeeded they made laws according to their own theoretical programme, or put forth decrees. All private property was confiscated, all the wealth of individuals became the property of the nation, and all tools and machinery were

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given over to the laborers. There were no more land-owners, no capitalists, no owners of factories. The state reigned master of all, and sole owner and capitalist. It regulated all social life, and distributed benefits to whom it would. But this immense revolution, this universal overthrow, these sudden radical changes, did not, of course, take place without a dreadful struggle. Classes do not let themselves be despoiled, even though their wealth may have been ill-gotten. Dreadful outbreaks took place all over the country. Land-owners preferred to be killed on their own door-steps rather than surrender their land. Some destroyed their own wealth, flooded their mines, broke up the railroads, and blew up their factories; while investors burned up their bonds and certificates, and flung their gold and silver into the sea. Some houses had to be besieged; whole cities had to be taken by storm. There was for years a frightful civil war, during which the streets were red with blood and corpses were carried off by the rivers. After that the sovereign state encountered all kinds of difficulties before it could set the new state of things on foot. Values were regulated by the worth of each hour of man's labor, and the system of *bons de travail* was adopted. At first they appointed a committee to superintend production, and to divide its profits pro rata, according to the work of each man. Afterwards they found that they must have other bureaus of control, and a complicated organization was created which impeded the wheels of the new system. They fell back on the old plan of quartering men in barracks, and no system ever bore more hard on men, or left them less freedom. And yet the change was in the end accomplished; it was one step onward on the way to justice. Labor had become honorable, and wealth daily increased and was more equitably distributed. So at last the wage-earning system violently disappeared, together with capital, money, and commerce. My traveller told me that the collectivist state, once overwhelmed by so many catastrophes and watered by so much blood, is now finally becoming peaceful, and is entering on a period of soli-

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darity and fraternity, with a population industrious and free."

Josine ended, and looked again thoughtfully into the horizon. Luc gently remarked:

"Yes, that is one of the ways of blood, with which I would never take any part. But now, what matters the shedding of blood, since it has led man to harmony and peace?"

Then, after a silence, Sœurette spoke, her large eyes looking out on the scene before her across the gigantic ridges of the Monts Bleuses:

"I, too, have learned something," said she; "people who were eye-witnesses have told me frightful things. There is a great empire not far from here, where anarchists have succeeded in blowing up the old structure by bombs and dynamite. The people had suffered long; so they joined the anarchists, and completed the liberating work of destruction. They swept away the very fragments of the old rotten social system. For a long time towns flamed every night like torches, and in them perished the wicked old councillors who refused to give in. Then came that deluge of blood of which the prophets of anarchy had long spoken as a necessity. After that new times came. The watchword was no longer, 'Give to each man according to his work,' but 'All men have a right to life and shelter, food and clothing.' At first they put all the wealth into one mass, and afterwards began to divide it, not giving anything to any one until they were certain that there was enough for all. Men went to work, and nature, by aid of science, was made so productive that it furnished enormous wealth. They enjoyed great prosperity. There was enough to satisfy the appetites of all even had there been a tenfold larger population. When thievish and parasitical society has disappeared, and money, the source of all crime, has been abolished, with all our savage laws of repression and restriction, which are also responsible for much iniquity, peace will reign in a liberated community where the happiness of each should be the happiness of all. There will be no

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more authority of any kind, no more laws will be wanted, no more government. If the nihilists availed themselves of fire and sword to make a first extermination, it was because they knew that they could not otherwise destroy completely the old hereditary belief in monarchy and religion, and crush authority forever, root and branch, without this brutal cauterization of the world's sore. They thought it necessary to cut with one blow the links of hereditary belief in the old errors of the past, and make an end of despotism. They did this thoroughly, hoping that the links they cut apart might never again be united. All politics, they held, were bad and poisoned because they were made up of compromises and concessions—bargains of which the weaker party always got the worst. And on the ruins of the old world, when they had been swept away, they thought the pure and noble dream of anarchy would at length be realized. It was the largest, most ideal conception of a state of peace and happiness for man—man free under a free social system, every creature free from every bond, free to follow his own instincts, to enlarge all his faculties, and to be happy in the possession of his own part of the general wealth."

Sœurette ceased to speak, and stood thoughtful and silent, with her elbow leaning on the back of Luc's chair. After a few moments Luc spoke again, though his voice was slower and weaker:

"Yes, in those last days, on the borders of the promised land, the anarchists will rejoin the disciples of Fourier, even as the collectivists themselves will join with others. Their roads may have been different, but their end will be the same—the happiness of all under justice and liberty."

Then, after musing for a few moments, he resumed:

"How many tears, how much bloodshed, what abominable wars there have been to conquer the fraternal peace desired equally by all! How many centuries of fratricide have there been when the main question was merely who should pass to the right and who to the left, in order to reach first the bourn of final happiness."

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Suzanne, who till then had sat silent, gazing like the rest into the horizon, spoke at last, but her vision had filled her heart with a great thrill of pity:

"Ah! the last war," said she, "the world's last battle! It will be so terrible that men forever will break their swords and spike their cannon. At first it was great social crises that were to reconstruct the world, and I have heard fearful accounts from men who came near losing their senses by reason of the fearful shock these things produced in the world. In the mad struggle, when nations were big with projects for a future social system, half Europe arrayed itself on land against the other half, and whole continents engaged in strife; whole squadrons put to sea to establish the authority of their people over the whole earth. No nation had been able to resist the impulse; they were drawn into it by others; they drew up in line, two great armies burning with race hatreds, resolved to annihilate each other, as if in their empty and uncultivated fields where there were two men at work there was one too many. And two great armies of brothers turned to foes met somewhere in the centre of Europe upon vast plains where millions of human beings conveniently could slay each other. The troops spread out over miles and miles, followed by their reserves, such a torrent of men that the fighting lasted for a month. Every day more human flesh was food for bullets and bombs. They even did not have time to carry off the dead. Heaps of bodies served as walls, behind which fresh regiments fought and were killed. Night did not stay the carnage; they killed each other in the darkness. The sun, as it rose each day, shone upon pools of blood, on a field of carnage covered with stacks of dead. There was a roar like thunder everywhere, and whole regiments seemed to disappear in a flash. The men who fought had no need to draw near each other, since cannon threw their shells for miles, and each of such shells swept bare an acre of the earth, poisoning and asphyxiating the very heavens. Balloons, too, sent down balls and bombs to set fire to the cities. Science had invented fresh explosives, murderous engines able to carry

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death to enormous distances, or to swallow many people at once, like an earthquake. And what a monstrous massacre took place on the last night of that tremendous battle! Never had such a human sacrifice smoked under heaven. More than a million of men lay there in the great devastated fields, beside the rivers, and scattered over the meadows. A man could have walked for hours, seeing everywhere was a harvest of dead bodies, lying with staring eyes and open mouths, seeming to reproach men for their madness. This was the world's last battle, so completely had its horrors impressed mankind. People woke up from their mad intoxication, and all felt the certainty that war was no longer possible, for science that was meant to make life prosperous was not to be employed in the work of death."

Suzanne was once more silent, but was trembling, and her eyes were bright. She was dreaming of peace in the future. Luc spoke once more, though he could not raise his voice above a breath:

"Yes, war," he said, "is dead. The world has reached its last stage. Brothers may now give each other the fraternal kiss; they are in port after their long, rough voyage. My day is done, and now I may go to sleep."

He spoke no more, and Josine, Sœurette, and Suzanne, without moving, waited for his last sigh. They were not sad. They watched with tender fervor in the death chamber, that was so calm and cheerful, so full of sunshine and of flowers. Below the window the happy children were joyously romping. They could hear the voices of the babes and the laughter of the older ones; it was a foretaste of the future happiness of the race upon its march to joy in the future. The great blue sky was over them, and the kindly sun, the father and fertilizer, whose fire had been captured and turned to domestic uses, was shining in the horizon. And under the gleam of its rays of glory sparkled the roofs of Beauclair triumphant, at this time of the day a bee-hive of active workers whom regenerated labor had made happy because there was a just division of wealth among them. And beyond the plain of Rou-

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magne, beyond the Monts Bleuses, a federation of nations was in progress, so that all might be at last one brotherly people, and so the human race should fulfil its destiny of love and truth and peace.

Then Luc, with one last look, took in the town, the horizon, and the fields, where the reform that he had begun was going on so prosperously. His work was done. He had founded his city. And so he died, passing into the unmeasured flood of universal love and life eternal.

THE END

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